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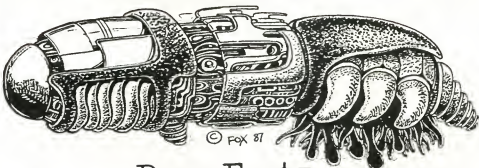
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IMPULSE



Doug Fratz

Welcome to THRUST 32, our latest almost-quarterly collection of interesting, if dated, articles, pretending to be a magazine.* This issue appears destined to reach you a full month late—for the usual reasons.

The Issue At Hand: The serendipitous theme for this issue seems to be the interplay between science fiction and the real world and its problems.

Charles Platt, in "Taking Liberties," takes a look at the Libertarian-SF connection in general, and Libertarian SF author Victor Koman in particular. (Charles is now—temporarily, I believe—residing in sunny Southern California, and writing nearly full time.) Meanwhile, John Shirley sounds a clarion call to arms, urging the SF elite to get involved with real world concerns, in what I understand may be John's final "Make It Scream" column for THRUST (at least for a while). And Ardath Mayhar continues the theme in "The Analog 'We,'" setting out her own arguments regarding science fiction's potential as a positive force in real-world affairs.

This issue also features conclusive evidence that Richard E. Geis is back in action, reading (and think about) SF. Dick looks at four recent SF novels this issue, and promises to be back on a regular basis for future issues.

This issue's "interview" is quite unlike our traditional fare. It is a unique chronicle of a brief, but extraordinary, meeting with Robert A. Heinlein in 1986. It is probably quite common for SF fans to develop schemes to meet, however briefly, their favorite authors. But how many drive 1000 miles to the author's home to drop in unannounced—and have it work out amazingly well?

Michael J. Patrick did just that, and tells his story in "One Hundred and Fifty Minutes: A Meeting With Robert A. Heinlein." Somehow, what should by all reasonable expectations have been an annoying and embarrassing situation turned out to be a mystically sublime experience for Mr. Patrick and his wife—thanks to his naive outlook and utter sincerity, the kindness and sensitivity of one of SF's greatest authors, and a lot of luck.

Gains and Losses: Despite my continuing to beat the bushes of SFdom looking for new assistant editors for THRUST, I have only managed to break even in the past few months.

*Just in case my sarcasm slipped by without your notice, this is a reference to Charlie Brown's assessment of THRUST on page 38 of the February 1989 issue of *Locust*, which, come to think of it, is more a collection of news than a magazine.

I'm pleased to announce the addition of Anthony Trull to THRUST's staff as assistant editor. Anthony lives in St. Louis, has been reading SF for 16 years, discovered fandom in 1978, has published a fanzine called *Anecibio*, and went to the Clarion SF Writers Workshop in 1982. He's currently working full-time while finishing his degree, majoring in information systems with a communications minor.

On the other hand, it is with great regret that I announce the resignation of assistant editor Ann Morris. Since coming onboard in 1986 with issue 25, Ann has been one of THRUST's most active and dependable staff members. Unfortunately, Ann is now working full time, and feels unable to continue the hectic pace of working on THRUST as well as keeping active in local (Riverview, Florida) fan activities. Her able and enthusiastic assistance will be greatly missed.

Meanwhile, I remain one or two assistant editors short of a full staff. Despite no less than 7 serious candidates early this year, all but Anthony ended up declining. Could it be the crushing workload (2-4 hours per week)? The low pay (next to nothing)? Fear of reprisals from angry authors impugned by THRUST's rowdy reviewers?

If any of you brave souls out there are still interested, please write for details.

What's in a Name? Several years ago, fan cartoonist Phil Foglio teamed up with fantasy author Robert Asprin to adapt in comic book format Asprin's humorous fantasy novel, *Myth Adventures*. Starblaze published these in

1985 and 1986 as *Myth Adventures One* and *Myth Adventures Two*.

I didn't read them when they appeared, but since my son Alex (now 4 1/2) is now becoming old enough to be introduced to the genre, I have been reading such books to him, to his great enjoyment. I was reading *Myth Adventures Two* to him recently when completely unexpectedly on page 63 we came across the panels seen below.

Apparently Phil Foglio or Robert Asprin (neither of whom I know, but both have undoubtedly read THRUST over the years) believe that "FRATZ!" is the sound made when a female wizard tries to cross into "the next dimension over" and hits "some sort of interdimensional barrier" and "fries".

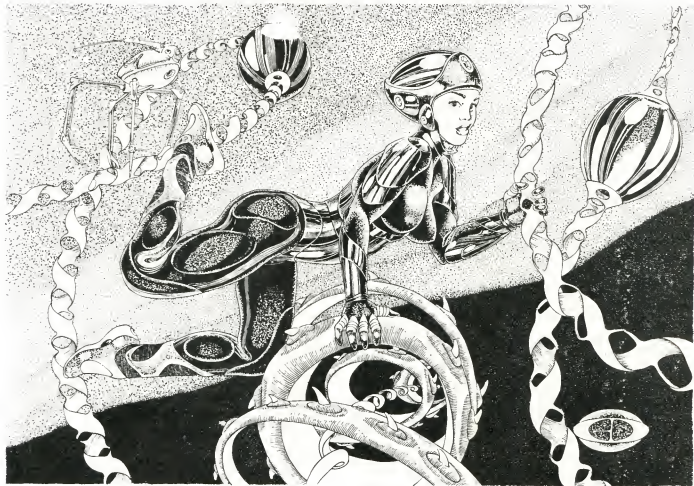
This is not the way I expect to find out about these things. Didn't any of THRUST's readers discover this panel while perusing this volume and consider it worth mentioning to me that my name had been taken in vain?

Oh well, the world continues to be full of surprises...

Coming Soon: Material scheduled for future issues includes an overdue article promised by Janrae Frank on SF and fantasy from the Feminist presses, "Remembering Doc Smith" by Stephen A. Kalits, Jr., more scathing wit from David Langford, Gene Wolfe on R. A. Lafferty, and interviews with Connie Willis, Martin Caldwell, Thomas N. Scortia, Boris Vallejo, Forrest J. Ackerman, James Morrow, Janet Morris, and Lisa Goldstein. THRUST 34 is due out in June. □



NEWS FROM THE GHETTO



Charles Platt

"Taking Liberties"

Cruising slowly past the shopping malls, palm trees, and freeway interchanges of Los Angeles, I can't help thinking that the pioneers who settled the American West must have had at least one thing in common with science-fiction readers. They dreamed of having enough space and freedom to invent a new way of life.

Visitors from the East Coast laugh at L.A. for being tasteless and naive; but the dream still survives, here, despite trashy buildings and creeping suburban conservatism. Personally, I don't find anything to laugh at in that. I'm all in favor of elbow-room, and the more freedom I have to pursue happiness in my own idiosyncratic way, without interfering with my neighbors or having people in authority interfere with me, the better I like it.

This is basically a libertarian outlook. Libertarianism flourishes in these spacious, sunny climes, and so does science fiction. Where the two forms coexist, we find libertarian science fiction—although, of course, this is not an exclusively Californian phenomenon. Robert Heinlein, L. Neil Smith, C. M. Kornbluth, F. Paul Wilson, and Eric Frank Russell are just a few of

the authors who have used science fiction to dramatize libertarian principles in action. Russell's "And Then There Were None" is a classic in this respect, depicting a society in which government does not exist, and one free thinker can defeat an entire bureaucracy.

To this tradition must now be appended a new name: that of Victor Koman.

Koman defines libertarianism as growing out of "the nonaggression principle—the idea that no one has the right to initiate the use of force against others. That can be expanded to all sorts of far-reaching implications, such as opposition to taxation and other forms of what we view as aggression, or coercion, by a group such as the government against the individual."

The term "libertarian" was coined to express a belief in personal liberty without compromise—an inalienable right that typically exists in opposition to the regulatory powers of the State.

Koman suggests that the American Declaration of Independence summarized it best. "It asked that it is the right of the people to alter or abolish any State that becomes destructive of the ends of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. The U.S. Constitution was actually the first Statist wedge, inculcating itself into the proto-libertarian American revolution. At that point, the long, slow process of government intrusion and Statist takeover began."

This deep-seated suspicion of authority has led Koman to an outlook that seems radical even to some fellow libertarians. He expresses it in science fiction novels such as *The Jehovah Contract*, his most serious work to date, which presents a sympathetic portrait of a political assassin.

"I've always wondered what sort of person is an assassin," he says. "Does he have convictions? Does he have a moral stance? Or is he merely a hired thug? I decided to create an assassin with heroic motives, who only assassinates tyrants or would-be tyrants. He's an avenging-angel sort of person, who attacks those who initiate violence."

It's always dangerous to infer too much from a work of fiction, so I ask Koman to what extent he endorses his protagonist's behavior.

"It depends who's being assassinated. I think that all politicians, by their very choice of profession (if you could call it that) are... well, they're asking for it. By their actions, they're admitting that what they want is power over other people. They may say 'Vote for me and I'll set you free,' but what they're really after is power, and therefore they're initiating violence. They are committed to theft, rape, plunder, and murder—the four functions of the State—and therefore the person who exclusively assassinates agents of government is behaving morally.

"At the same time," he continues, "because politicians are merely figureheads behind which the power-elite hides, assassination is ultimately futile, for it doesn't really affect the true centers of power. It does, though, provide employment for political observers."

The *Jehovah Contract* actually has a more playful tone than this suggests. The action is narrated in hard-boiled private-eye style from the viewpoint of a washed-up hit-man who takes on a seemingly impossible assignment when a deranged evangelist hires him to kill god. As he pursues this goal, however, he realizes that the world would indeed benefit if god could be banished from popular mythology. After all, divine will can only interfere with personal liberty.

I ask to what extent this is a serious message.

"My most important goal in writing is to entertain people, and I think that I find libertarian ideas—such as assassinating god—are entertaining in and of themselves. So I tend to keep the underlying philosophy veiled, and let the action and the conflict guide people to their own conclusions, which I hope will be identical with mine.

"At the same time, I see the ideas in fiction as being like an infectious virus. If I can infect enough people with a new idea, they will be affected by that in ways they may not realize, and they will in turn pass on that idea to others."

Koman wrote *The Jehovah Contract* in 1978. During the next eight years, the manuscript was rejected by nearly fifty paperback and hardback publishers, mainly because of its atheistic message. I was happy to be able to rescue it from obscurity in my part-time capacity as science-fiction editor for Franklin Watts, who published the American hardcover edition in 1987. Subsequently, it won the Prometheus Award as the best libertarian novel of the year, and a paperback edition is forthcoming from Avon Books.

Koman's next novel, *Solomon's Knife*, tackles another controversial theme: the morality of abortion. The book postulates a new procedure that would enable a fetus to be transplanted from a woman who seeks to terminate her pregnancy to another woman who is infertile and desires children. This seems to circumvent the whole abortion debate, yet feminists and fundamentalists are depicted as being equally outraged by it, mainly because it threatens their positions of power as public figures. Here again, Koman portrays people in authority as being primarily motivated by money and power, rather than the pious ideals they profess to uphold;

and the real hero is the individual who defies authority and follows her conscience.

Solomon's Knife will be published by Franklin Watts in the Spring of 1989. Clearly, it's intended as a non-category book with mass appeal. Does this mean Koman is moving away from science fiction?

"It depends whether you consider James Michener's *Space* a science-fiction novel. The book I'm working on now falls in that category. But I want to write all sorts of things. I want to write a pirate novel—pirates have always been my heroes. They were the renegades, the rogues, and in fact the freebooters, who looted government ships, were proto-libertarian. Their ships were not automatically run. The people who did the work—i.e. pirating—received shares of the loot according to a very strict code. They signed contracts when they went on board, and some were also quasi-masonic in their setup, so that you had the Freemason influence, which was behind the American revolution, also being evident in piracy on the high seas."

Does his sympathy for villains reflect a rebellious childhood? Was he, like many science-fiction writers, a misfit who felt alienated at school?

"No. I was very much the so-so, okay kid in school. Sometimes the class clown, but never anything more daring than jumping off the second story of a building to imitate Hollywood stunt men. My parents were of a very conservative mold, but they never interfered with my goals or my desires. They encouraged me to think for myself."

In appearance, Koman is deceptively youthful (he admits only that he is "around forty"), with sharp eyes, a slim build, and shoulder-length, wavy hair. Meeting him for the first time, a friend of mine remarked that he looked a bit like Robin Hood.

"If there's any resemblance, it's not intentional," he says. "In fact, long hair is just basically what I can afford."

Pressed for more personal details, he states that he's married with one daughter, and when he's not writing, he's a house-husband, performing the domestic role. I sense he's not particularly comfortable divulging these details, and prefers to maintain a degree of reclusiveness. His phone is always answered by a machine, and for publication, he prefers to say only that he lives in the vicinity of Los Angeles. Does he keep a low profile because of his subversive politics? Is he living in fear of the authorities?

"The question of competence comes up," he answers drily. "Is the State competent to crush dissent? I don't really think so. I simply prefer not to be a public person. It's a personal desire of mine." He pauses. "At the same time, it doesn't hurt to play it safe."

His antipathy toward government extends even to a refusal to join the Libertarian Party.

"No one in the State can roll back the growth of the State. It's not in their interests. Anyone who enters the government or becomes part of the State with an idea toward reforming or reducing it is either corrupted or neutralized, and therefore no change from within is possible."

"Members of the Libertarian Party are under the delusion that if only we could get the right people in, things could be better. But the nature of the institution itself determines who gets into power. It's an obvious lie that anybody

who wants to can become President. If you can scrape together \$40 million, and cut all the right deals, and sell the next four years of your presidency before you're even running, then you can possibly become President—if the ruling class, the power centers, agree."

So what does he suggest instead? "Ideally, total absence of government. I'm an anarchist!"

My inevitable response is that, outside of the wish-fulfillment scenarios in science-fiction stories, anarchy wouldn't work.

"But it already does work, because the State cannot permeate and control us entirely, so all that we accomplish in spite of the State is done in the absence of it or in defiance of it. Therefore, human action without a State is possible. In fact, it's the only way human action is possible. The only way one can survive in a statist milieu is to perform acts that are consciously, unconsciously, or even inadvertently in defiance of the State."

In his scheme of things, would everything be legal?

"There would be no legislation, but there would certainly be order and codes of conduct, based on common law, tradition, things like that. But there would be no monopoly on the use of force, which is what the State is. Anyone would be able to defend himself or herself against crime on an ad-hoc basis as it happened, and any person who was found to have harmed another would be liable for restitution. And there are mechanisms that could arise in a libertarian society that would deal with that, either through insurance companies or protection agencies, private guard agencies, and so on. Some people are nervous about the idea of this kind of power in private hands, but it's obviously trivial compared with the megadeath possibilities we have with supergovernments that have a monopoly on force."

Koman expounds these views politely and carefully, speaking with genteel precision. He's nothing like one's mental image of a wild-eyed, oppressed, bomb-throwing anarchist. I can't help wondering what the factors were that helped to mold these beliefs.

"In the sixties, I fancied myself a William F. Buckley conservative. I never used drugs. It wasn't until I came to Los Angeles in the early seventies, where I ran into Samuel Konkin and J. Neil Schulman and the other inhabitants of the anarcho-village, that my thoughts crystallized into a more coherent design. Before, I would think, oh, 'People should be free, right?' and that was the extent of it. By learning the reasons for freedom, the logic behind it, I came to a more concise and precise reason for believing in human freedom and the evils of the State."

From the above, I think it's clear that Koman truly is a libertarian author. It would be a mistake, however, to conclude that his work is tiresomely political. His propaganda is sufficiently subtle not to distract from the characters and plot, and even where the polemic intrudes, it is provocative enough to be entertaining regardless of whether one agrees with it. To those of us who read science fiction in the hope of finding original, challenging ideas, this makes a refreshing change from the contemporary norm of heroic quests and space adventures. Victor Koman is, most of all, a lively storyteller who deserves the success he has finally begun to achieve. □

One Hundred and Fifty Minutes into Forever:



A Meeting With Robert A. Heinlein

by Michael J. Patritch

The following article violates Robert A. Heinlein's primary rule of writing: "Include plenty of sex and violence".

By now, everyone who loves him, knows the salient facts. He had breakfast at his home in Carmel, California Sunday, May 8, 1988 as usual. Afterward he wished to nap before his bath. When Mrs. Heinlein and the nurse went to wake him, for his bath and change his sheets, he was gone. Simple as that. His heart, after compensating for years of emphysema, just stopped beating.

It was my great privilege to meet Mr. Heinlein on April 24, 1986, at the home he and his wife Ginny designed and lived in for eighteen years on Bonny Doon Road in Santa Cruz County, California.

First I must explain something. I can call him Robert Heinlein, although I don't like to. To me, and this is strictly a personal choice, he is Mr. Heinlein. In his presence, I was awed by his multi-faceted brilliance, his gentleness and his kindness. He earned my respect, mostly because of the books he wrote—to be sure, but also because he had the ability to let me see myself as he knew me to be instead of how I thought I

was. The Japanese have a word for it: "Sensei", meaning Master or Teacher. There is no comparable term of respect in the English language other than the word "Mister". To me he is and always will be *Mister Robert A. Heinlein*.

Although he did have visitors before his death, particularly on the occasion of his 80th birthday, my wife and I are pleased that we were allowed one of the last few visits with the Father of Modern Day Science Fiction. Three months after our meeting, Mr. Heinlein began suffering severe medical problems which culminated in his being operated on for the repair of the maxillary artery, on August 19, 1986, and his recovery was painfully slow. If you know Mrs. Heinlein as I know Mrs. Heinlein (and I have never met her personally, whereas we have corresponded for years), she was and is fiercely protective of her husband. Besides being a chemist, biochemist, aviation test engineer and experimental horticulturalist, as well as speaking seven

languages fluently, she was his creative consultant, business administrator, took care of the day to day chores in running a home and answered all of his correspondence. (My first letter went to his agent in New York, then forwarded to California. I had an answer from Mrs. Heinlein in thirteen days!) She ran the house with an iron hand allowing Mr. Heinlein to be free of mundane details so he could concentrate on his work. And she politely but firmly turned away visitors.

Mr. Heinlein's abhorrence of interviews is legendary. I must point out that our meeting was not an interview. It was never *meant* to be an interview. I simply went to his home (no tape-recorders, no microphones, no notes, no nothing), to meet the man I admired for so many years; and yes, to sit at the feet of the Master.

I feel a grave sense of loss because I lost a friend. It is precisely because I lost a friend that I wanted to write this article. But more than that. I wanted to give a part of him to each and every one of you who loved him but never had a chance or the opportunity (or downright chutzpah), to meet him personally as I did.

The meeting took place exactly as I will describe it here. The words he spoke are the

exact words he spoke. I do not have a photographic memory. But when I transcribed the meeting onto paper that night and the next day and the next, his words were as clear to me as if he were sitting in front of me repeating them. Those of you who have treasured Mr. Heinlein's works will know what I mean; the rest of you, trust me on this.

I wish I could say the morning of April 24, 1986, broke bright and beautiful. Perhaps it did, I didn't notice. I was too nervous. That day, after years of planning, I was going to attempt a meeting with Robert A. Heinlein.

Try as I might to put on a cheerful face for my wife, who was to accompany me, my thoughts were turned inward. Like a soldier before battle I engaged in meaningless conversation to hide the doubts and fears that were digging at me inside.

Frankly, I was very apprehensive. I had never attempted something like this before. Movie stars and politicians rely on testosterone and estrogen, and a press agent, for popularity. Robert Heinlein was his own man. Even though he cared deeply what people thought of him, his integrity did not permit him to deviate from what he truly believed in. I admired that and I wanted to meet the man who had touched my soul so deeply over the last 30 years. My first acquaintance with Robert Heinlein came between the pages of "Boy's Life" when I was a Boy Scout around the age of 12.

The most formidable task in my life was to push the white button at the side of his gate at 6000 Bonny Dood Road, Santa Cruz County, California. When you hope and plan for years, that final moment, which can bring success or failure, is most assuredly the hardest of all.

The house was hidden from the road below by pine trees and the unkempt foliage Southern California is known for. At 78, he could no longer look after the grounds himself and he had just fired his gardener three weeks previously, so I'm sure the shrubs were not as he would have liked. Surrounding the house was a six foot chain link fence, topped with rusted barbed wire. Barring the entrance was an electronic gate with call station next to it. I summoned what courage I had and called.

A baritone voice answered, "Yes?"

"Mr. Heinlein?" I ventured.

"Who is speaking?" the voice countered.

"My name is Michael J. Patrictch, and I am from Cheyenne, Wyoming. A science fiction writer friend of mine, by the name of L. Neil Smith, asked that since I was going to be in the area anyway, if I could possibly hand deliver one of his books to you, Sir." (In the area? I traveled over a thousand miles just to be "in the area.")

"I'm in ill health and unable to socialize" the voice said, "but yes, you may deliver the book. Drive through when the gate opens." Immediately the gate rolled back allowing access. The old cliché, the one about being so nervous you're weak in the knees, is true; I barely made it back to the car. My knees would not cooperate—thank God I was driving a car equipped with an automatic transmission. Once in the circular drive (I parked as far to the North as possible, so as not to interfere with anyone else who might come—I noticed there was no car under the porte cochere), I dove into the back seat, to grab the

book I promised, to grab another book—one I hoped he'd sign—to give the camera to Karol in hopes of perhaps taking a picture.

Turning around, there was Mr. Heinlein dressed in white shirt, seersucker bathrobe, tan pants, blue velcro fasten slippers, his hands resting patiently on his cane. I approached and my mind went totally blank. I had not prepared anything to say, in fact I never thought I would get that far; in truth, I hadn't prepared anything to say, or made any notes because they would be there to haunt me if my trip ended in disappointment.

"Mr. Heinlein," I began, "this is a great honor and privilege to meet you, Sir. And I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for all the years of reading your writing has produced." Those words weren't exactly a masterpiece of prose, but as I faltered over them, he knew they came from the heart. "Oh, and this is my wife, Karol Ann." Karol had walked up behind me and was standing quietly. He got right down to business.

"I suppose you would like me to inscribe this," he said, indicating his book *The Cat Who Walks Through Walls* in my right hand.

"If you would, Sir," was all I managed to say. There was a pause. A pause, I'm sure in which he was determining if we were a threat to him or not.

"Come in," was all he said. To this day I don't know why he allowed us in. He was alone, although we didn't know this at the time, and there were two of us. I could have easily been a "nut" looking for notoriety by doing badly harm to someone famous. I just thank the Lord he saw into my heart and instinctively knew I was absolutely no threat to him. I am sorry I never had the chance to meet Mrs. Heinlein, but I have the sneaking suspicion that if she had been home we would never have been allowed entry. She was gone on her weekly shopping trip. So in a sense I was pleased she wasn't home and sad I missed her.



Once he motioned for us to sit down on the circular couch in the living room, I presented him with L. Neil Smith's book, *The Gallatin Divergence*. He looked at the book and thumbed through the first few pages.

I glanced around at what I could see of his home from where I sat. In my mind's eye I expected to see a mansion complete with malds, and each room filled with memorabilia from all over the world. On second glance I saw a pragmatic no nonsense house highly suited to the occupants, and designed to fulfill all the basic human needs from bed to breakfast. A little like the spaceship Dora, and almost as highly efficient.

The home is essentially a circular white brick one story abode. Jutting out above the front door and porch is a modern version of the old-fashioned porte cochere (loosely translated, this is a portico to keep people from getting wet while getting into or out of cars as they come or go from the house). Inside the house, besides the bookcases, of which there are plenty, directly in the center of the house stands a hexagonal-shaped glass atrium, approximately ten feet across, open at the top. Within, plants and a lone tree flourish. A glass door allows access to the exterior space.

"So you brought a book from L. Neil Smith. Is this his latest?"

"No," I answered. "That won't be out, I think he said, until June."

"I think I have this... I've already read this," said Mr. Heinlein, as he put the book down. "He's that far out Libertarian. I'm so much a libertarian that I have no use for the whole Libertarian movement." (According to Mrs. Heinlein, with whom I have corresponded, he always referred to himself as a libertarian with a small "l") "I've spoken at Libertarian conventions and I've given them the life boat problem and I've never met a Libertarian yet who could solve it." In college I had heard of several lifeboat problem variations and participated in a few, yet I was so filled with awe at being in his presence I didn't dare ask which one he was speaking of.

"What would you do?" I asked. I hoped that I would figure out which life-boat problem he meant later. Eventually I learned he and his wife were always thinking up variations to the generic life-boat problem. (You are in a life-boat with other people of various socio-economic backgrounds. There is not enough food or water for all to survive. You have a gun. Whom do you shoot?) In fact, his book *The Number of the Beast* is an exercise in the subject of command. "I'd shoot," he said, "but then my training has been in the Navy."

He proceeded to open the book *The Cat Who Walks Through Walls* and began inscribing it. At that moment, with his permission, I stood up and took several pictures of him, knowing that within five minutes we would be back on our way to Sacramento, and the major reason for our trip: a wedding. Besides, I didn't want to overstay my (our) welcome. I eyed Karol Ann and she stood up.

She said, "Since you are in poor health we don't want to take up much of your time." I wanted to add to her comment but he motioned for us to sit back down.

"All that's the matter with me is that I'm suffering from a terminal case of old age, but there's nothing pressing right now. I just finished

156,000 words. It will be out this fall. The book is called **Maureen**.

"Would they ever change the title?" I asked knowing editors do strange things. And I wanted to know the title so I could be sure not to miss it.

"They wouldn't dare," he replied. (They did, and the title is **To Sail Beyond the Sunset**.)

"Is it a continuation of **The Cat Who Walks Through Walls**? I was concerned over the fate of Col. Campbell and Gwen-Hazel, but I was heartbroken over the fate of Pixel—I hate cats, but I liked Pixel.

"No," said Mr. Heinlein. "This is about the life of Maureen Johnson. She is the mother of Lazarus Long; daughter of Ira Johnson. Ira Howard who founded the Howard Foundation died an old man at the age of [?]. He died in 1873, or was it 1874? It's so hard to remember exact dates. I have a chart somewhere in my office that I refer to." He arose from the couch.

"You speak as if your characters were real people?" I said.

He looked at me. "If I took ten grains of aspirin, would you disappear?"

"No?"

"Well then." At that moment, I learned more about writing in ten seconds than most people learn in ten years. He went to the door and in pranced Pixel.

Cradling Pixel, he returned and sat down. "Pixel enjoys running next door and cavorting whenever their cat is in heat. When she's finished then he spends more time around the house." Pixel obviously did not like his escapades discussed, as he jumped down and disappeared into another room.

"Where are you from?" he asked suddenly.

"I was born in Portland, Oregon," I said, "but I was brought up all over the world. My father is a retired Lt. Colonel in the Army."

"What Branch? Infantry, Artillery, Armor."

"5th Infantry."

"My older brother, Major General Lawrence Heinlein, plus three others, were the only occupying force for three weeks in Japan. He was afraid of a Japanese uprising. He slept with one eye open for three weeks."

Turning his attention to Karol, he said, "Are you using your maiden name as your professional name?" My notes do not indicate it, however, earlier in our conversation he had asked about our education—I at one time was a teacher, and Karol Ann is a practicing Certified Nurse-Midwife.

"Yes," she said, "I use my maiden name. With diplomas hanging on my office wall, it's less confusing to the patients if I go by one name." He was pleased with her response but looked at me to discern my reaction.

"I have no problem with that whatsoever," I said. He nodded in agreement.

"Women have sought their freedom so hard that they have now put themselves in the position of having lost. How? They now have to do everything in the home and everything at work. Take care of their husbands, their professional responsibilities and take care of their children." He expounded on the topic in such detail there was no possible way of remembering it all. "Midwives here," he said, "the doctors are giving them a lot of trouble. I've been following it in the newspaper. The doctors think they are in control of everybody. In the old days you didn't have to have any particular training for what you did. You simply put out a sign that said what you could and couldn't do. How do you

spell your name?"

"K-R-A-K-A-U-E-R"

"Krakauer—German."

"Yes."

"How long have you been baby catching?"

"Seventeen years."

"Where did you get your cap?"

"Yale."

"I have a nephew who is starting into Yale this fall." (Something else about Yale only he and Karol Ann could comprehend and Karol told him about her experiences with young black pregnant women.)

"The system," he said, "encourages black, single females from the ghetto to have more babies."

"We're going to hell in a hand basket," I said. I have always believed that paying someone not to work is a tremendous incentive to do just that—not work! And a country, which insists upon giving more and more away to greater and greater numbers, cannot remain strong either financially, militarily or morally for very long. *There Ain't No Such Thing As A Free Lunch*.

"It does my heart good to hear a young man recognize that. I was afraid I was looking at the world through the myopia of old age. Old men have been saying the world is going to hell since Socrates, but when a young man recognizes it, it does my heart good. But we are forced to protect the infants," he sighed.

"We have to," said my wife.

"My father raised seven children on less than a private in the service makes today." "Don't gamble with borrowed money. We moved into this house before it was finished. We had to leave a lot of the inside unfinished until I wrote another book and got some more money. We designed this house ourselves. I was at the drawing board and Ginny was behind me doing the actual designing. When we came to her kitchen, I relinquished my place at the drawing board." Karol Ann, and I, understood. It would be unthinkable to do otherwise.

Indicating the living room, Mr. Heinlein

said, "There is nothing to clean under and nothing to trip over. The only rugs are foot rugs when you get out of the bed in the morning, and the only chairs are the ones on wheels. Everything else is built in; notice this couch, it's built in so as to be easy to dust under.

"And there are no decorations on the walls, just book shelves. Last week, Ginny and I gave away four thousand books." I looked at the shelves I could see in the living room and wondered where so many books could have been hidden, there was not an open space I could see. With a wave of his hand he indicated the top shelf of books. "They have to be sorted. The top shelf is closed off to me now. I want a reference I have to have someone else get it for me."

Turning to me, he said, "May I have your card?"

"Card, Sir?" I asked. I had been writing four years and had only sold one short story. I felt I was not in any position to announce to the world I was a writer. Perhaps in ten or fifteen years, maybe.

"Yes. Your card with your name on it," he said sharply. Karol spoke up. "My card is in my purse, in the car. Excuse me a moment."

"Mr. Heinlein," I said as Karol left the room, "what got me started in writing was **Expanded Universe**, when you wrote that several of your stories had been rejected. Well, I was afraid to write because I didn't want to be rejected. But then I read that you had been rejected and I felt that if Heinlein had been rejected, then what did I have to be afraid of." Karol returned and handed one of her business cards to him.

"But they all [were] published!" he said with just an imperceptible hint of pride. "Do you know my five rules of writing? I don't know if these rules are written down but I've given them in several lectures around the country." I grabbed someone's business card I happened to have in my shirt pocket and placed it on the arm of the couch ready to write. Mr. Heinlein admires competence and detests the lack thereof; the card was small but I was ready.

"Don't you have your 3 by 5 cards? Every writer should carry 3 by 5 cards in his pocket," he admonished.

"They're out in the car," I said. I didn't have any 3 by 5 cards, but I certainly wasn't going to admit that to him. I did remember a note pad in my wife's briefcase. "May I be excused, Sir?"

"Oh, I think I can find something around here for you to write on." He placed his cane between his knees and leaned forward to rise. I was aware of his frail condition and of how much effort it took for him to walk. I shuddered! I felt like a bumbling amateur (which I was). I too appreciate competence but I wasn't demonstrating any. I jumped out of my seat in a hurry.

"No trouble, Sir. Uh, they're out in the car. I'll be right back." I turned and skedaddled before he had a chance to move. He had allowed us to meet him face to face which was more than I ever thought possible; he invited us into his home, which was totally beyond any concept of reality I could believe in—to ask the man to do any more was unthinkable. Besides upon cursory examination of the living room as I stood up there was not a piece of paper visible within a radius of thirty feet.

I walked quickly around the wall behind me to the front door. I was still smarting over being a bumbling amateur. I suppose when someone meets a famous person one wants to project a respectable image. Well, I had gotten myself



into this and I would just have to get myself out of it.

Once through the door, panic hit me. Will the door lock automatically behind me? Some locks have hidden switches for just that purpose. I was torn between lacking manners and leave the door open or close it and discover it locks. He might consider me obtuse and end the interview because I wasn't intelligent enough to operate the latch on his door. It's strange the things one thinks of when properly motivated. I rotated the handle and watched the brass tongue retract into the door itself, but then refusing to believe my eyes, left the door open about an inch just in case. I ran like hell to the car for the notepad.

I returned to the living room, this time closing the door but careful not to slam it. He and my wife were discussing medicine. I sat down and positioned myself to write. Mr. Heinlein began as if he had not said a word since I left.

"My five rules are:"

"#1 Write."

"#2 Finish what you write."

"#3 Refrain from rewriting, except for editorial edict."

"#4 Place your writing on the market."

"And #5. Keep it on the market until it is sold."

He looked at me intently. "Write. I met [name omitted] when he was nineteen. He hawked newspapers all day and dodged cars. At night he wrote a thousand words. Every night he would return home and write a thousand words. I read some of his stuff." He leaned toward me for emphasis. "It was awful. I said to myself, 'here is a great writer'. Now, you ask, why did I think he was a great writer? Not because I thought he was smart. He's not very bright. But because he wrote. A thousand words a night. Four pages a night, every night."

"It's perseverance. That's what he has, perseverance. In fact, he still writes a thousand words a day."

"I'm compulsive writer. The only way I can get away from it is to take a vacation. Last year we took a cruise through the Northwest Passage. Asimov, the dummy, takes his typewriter with him. Imagine, taking your work with you when you go on vacation. I took my typewriter with me once and it froze solid. We went to Buena Ventura, Colombia, where it rains 320 inches a year and my typewriter froze solid." He picked up L. Neil Smith's book and looked at the cover.

"Sir, along with Neil's book, I wanted to bring my first book which is partially dedicated to you." The other half of 'partially' is to my wife for putting up with me all these years. But so far it's been rejected 38 times. But I keep trying!"

"I trust it has plenty of sex and violence?" he said looking at me in a no nonsense manner.

"Well, no Sir." I had written what I thought was a nice love story between a computer and a human, full of intrigue and the possibility of lost love, but nobody wanted to publish it.

"Take a look at Smith's books. He writes a good sketch. And he includes plenty of sex and violence."

"Sex doesn't have to be raw sex," he said. "There's enough of that already in print. Sex can be broken down into childbirth, romantic love.... I've discovered that childbirth is a form of violence. Any sentimental slob can set the scene where the doctor battles through a blinding

snow storm to arrive at the cabin to deliver a baby. Or arrive a little too late and the baby dies or both the mother and the baby dies.

"In **Farnham's Freehold**—do you remember that one?"

"Oh, it's been a long time," I said, drawing a complete blank. I couldn't remember **Farnham's Freehold**! It wasn't until much later did I realize the cannibalism had frightened me, so I pushed the story out of my mind. I didn't want to offend Mr. Heinlein, but I was afraid he might quiz me about the book, so I fessed up.

"In **Farnham's Freehold**," he continued, not the least bit upset by my lapse of memory, "I used childbirth but I did it a little differently. I had the mother die and the baby live. I got a letter from a man asking what sort of writer was I to let a mother die and her baby live. It is just that sort of situation I'm referring to."

"Violence," he continued, "can mean war, money or politics. In politics, it's who does it to whom. If you're not interested in politics then you are the whom, the who does it to."

He arose suddenly, and I believed our meeting with him was at an end. As he got up out of the couch, he stumbled briefly. Karol Ann, like a true nurse, was at his side in an instant. I was at his other side right behind her. "Let me help," she said. "You've been so kind to us." Then out of instinct she kissed him on the cheek. In the state I was in I would have kissed him too, if I hadn't been afraid of getting clobbered.

"Come with me," he said after he regained his balance, "but first let me show you my awards." We walked to the display near the front door. There, sitting on the bookshelf near the front door, were his four Hugo awards for best novel of the year; **Double Star** (1956), **Starship Troopers** (1959), **Stranger in a Strange Land** (1961) and **The Moon is a Harsh Mistress** (1966). In the center stood the Nebula Award for lifetime achievement. "These are some of the awards I've received for my writing, but the one award I cherish the most is this." He reached into the alcove and produced a small loving cup. Inscribed on the cup were the words: **World's Greatest Husband**. "Ginny gave this to me years ago," he said, "and this is my most favorite award." He then opened the door and let Pixel out. "Did you have any trouble with the door latch?" he asked.

"No, not at all," I said. "We've had some trouble with the latch. It sticks." My right knee jerked involuntarily and my intake of breath caught in my throat. I would have questioned my adroitness if he would have had to come to the door and rescue me from a stuck latch.

Mr. Heinlein then graciously showed us to his office, which can be entered only from the outside or through his bedroom.

"Let's see if I can find that article. I wrote an article about rare blood for the encyclopedia **Britannica** in 1976. They published it in the **Compton Yearbook**."

Karol told me later that while I was out in the car fetching a notepad, he had explained to her about rare blood, that he was A2 negative and enjoyed the writing project.

"It's around here somewhere," he said looking for the elusive reprint. "I think they're behind these stacks of journals. Here it is," he said pulling several copies from a shelf. "I'm so far behind in my reading. When I'm writing a book I never read a journal." He then began to

hunt for a pen. I offered him mine but he declined then found his.

As he began to inscribe "Are you a 'Rare Blood'?" for Karol Ann, I asked, "May I please take a picture of your office, Sir?" I was concerned he might say no, because offices, especially writer's offices are, at least to me, personal and very private places.

He chuckled. "Go ahead. Lots of people have." It was then I took the picture I have hanging in front of me on the wall of my office (every time I look up from my computer, there it is). A picture of his office and computer where he created the characters I have come to know and love over the past eighteen years. The picture hanging next to it is of him looking up as he is inscribing **The Cat Who Walks Through Walls**. He then carefully inscribed a copy of "Rare Blood" for Karol Ann, which we treasure to this day.

Looking up from his chair in his office, he said, "My wife and I used to live in Colorado Springs. We lived near the Broadmoor Hotel for many years. Ginny was very active physically. When she became too busy with the business to maintain her sports activities, she then could not oxygenate her brain properly because of the decreased circulation. The symptoms of Chronic Anoxemia can include many apparently unrelated symptoms of other disorders, dizziness, spots before your eyes, weakness. She diagnosed herself and we left Colorado Springs. At four thousand feet, she took the wheel."

"But you can take cruises," said my wife, always the nurse.

"Yes. In 1980 we took a wonderful cruise. We circumnavigated the globe." He then proceeded to tell us of his cruise, but my mind was on his office and the stories he had written there that I'm afraid I didn't pay much attention. "I want to show you this," he said getting up and walking to the cork board in front of his computer. He pointed to a picture. "This is my editor" (I couldn't pronounce let alone remember her name), "In Japan. This is my editor here in the United States." He pointed to still another picture. "This is a picture of L. Sprague de Camp. You're familiar with his works?"

"Yes, Sir," I replied. I wasn't, but I wasn't going to admit it.

"And this," he fingered a tiny oval shaped piece of lace, thumbtacked to the cork board, "is Ginny's bonnet and these are her gloves when she was little. This," he said, pointing to a black and white picture of a very lovely woman in uniform, "is Ginny, when her hair was red. Now, of course, it's white." I had always wondered why Mr. Heinlein had chosen such an unusual hair color for Lazarus, and other members of the Howard families. Now I knew the secret and it warmed my heart. "My wife looked at me. 'Do you notice how neat everything is,' she said."

I responded to the unavoidable. "I guess I'll have to clean up my office." Although every bookcase was filled, everything was in its place, while my office often suffers from paper droop.

"And these," he reached out and fingered a small metal object at the end of a metal bracelet, "are Ginny's dog tags when she was in the service." He was proud of his wife's service career and discussed it a length, while I was so impressed with his love for her, I remembered nothing of the conversation except for his total adoration of his wife.

He then took us into his bathroom, explaining he designed the shower himself in such a way there was no need for a shower curtain. He turned on the shower so we could see for ourselves that no spray escaped from the stall. I mentioned the swimming pool I could see out the window and he said he could no longer swim, "in my condition I can become unconscious at any time. Besides, I hate to exercise just for the sake of exercise; it's boring."

As we walked from his bedroom to the front door he told us that Ginny's bedroom, office and bath were a mirror image of his.

Near the front door, Mr. Heinlein, stopped and pointed with his cane to the upper book shelves. "Do you see any of my titles you don't have?"

"No, Sir," I answered, barely looking at the books. "I have all of your books." My wife almost broke my seventh and eighth ribs with her elbow.

"Wouldn't you like to take a closer look to be sure?" she urged. Sometimes when a computer is fed too much information too quickly it's processing function slows down considerably. My mind was suffering from information overload. Since my arrival I had been consciously trying to memorize every stimulus absorbed by my five senses. My mental energies were ebbing. "Well, yes I would," I said. I didn't want to insult him by saying something like, "Gee, I've never read this one before," or "When did you write this," or some equally inane phrase. I have, and have read all of his books, many more than once.

"That's why I keep this ladder here, just for this eventually," he said, indicating an aluminum step ladder resting against the far wall in the bathroom next to the front door.

I brought out the ladder, opened it and climbed to the top bookshelf. I had honestly no idea what I was doing on that ladder. All the titles were in my library in my office at home. Then I came upon the one book which was the reason I had traveled 1,200 miles to be where I was that day. I pulled the book from its resting place. "Sir," I said turning around with *Expanded Universe* in my hand, "this book got me started in writing, and, well, my copy is rather worn."

"Then take that with you," he said kindly. I don't remember coming down the ladder or putting it away but my wife assures me I did both.

Mr. Heinlein opened the front door on cue from some unknown signal and in walked Pixel. Both my wife and I went down to our knees as Pixel seemed interested in both of us. I wanted to touch the cat who walks through walls (I'm sentimental that way), my wife wanted to pet the pretty kitty. I wound up with a handful of air, his tail brushing lightly against my open palm. My wife, on the other hand, stroked Pixel for several seconds until Pixel stiffened and Karol Ann straightened up.

"I'm extremely glad you did that," Mr. Heinlein said with grave concern in his voice, as Karol Ann stood up. "Ginny has never learned when Pixel has had enough love, and as a result sports several battle scars on her wrists and arms."

After a brief pause, I said, "Sir, I think we had probably better go. I don't want to tire you out and we have such a long drive ahead of us back to Sacramento." He looked at us for the longest time then nodded his head as if acquiescing to the inevitable.

Always thoughtful, he made sure both of us used the bathroom near the front door, because it was "such a long trip back". I commented after my turn, about the 5 by 7 black and white nude on the bathroom wall. He said he'd taken it sometime in the 1930's. At the time I thought (and I still do) what a marvelous study of light and shadow. That picture is forever etched in my (and my wife's) mind. Also the Gadsden flag caught my attention and my thoughts immediately went back to *The Moon is a Harsh Mistress*. The flag had nothing to do with the book, as I recall, but it personalized his sense of freedom. On second thought, the flag just might symbolize the love of freedom both the Heinlein's had, for you see, the Gadsden flag actually belonged to his wife, Ginny.

"Mr. Heinlein," I asked thinking of the book in my hands. "Would you please do me the honor of signing this?" No one would ever believe he gave me a copy of *Expanded Universe* (I don't care); to sign it would be the completion of the gift in my own mind.

"My hands are very shaky now. I can no longer eat soup when it is served; I must have help." While saying this he took the book and pen from my grasp. Anticipating the need for a steady writing surface, I bent over in front of him offering my back, to write on. "Because my hands are not steady I will not inscribe this, I will only sign it." I adjusted my stance as I felt his presence.

"Now listen closely," he said once I had straightened up. "When you leave the driveway I want you to honk your horn twice to let me know you have cleared the gate. Do you understand?"

"Yes, Sir," I said, and Karol Ann and I

walked out of the house.

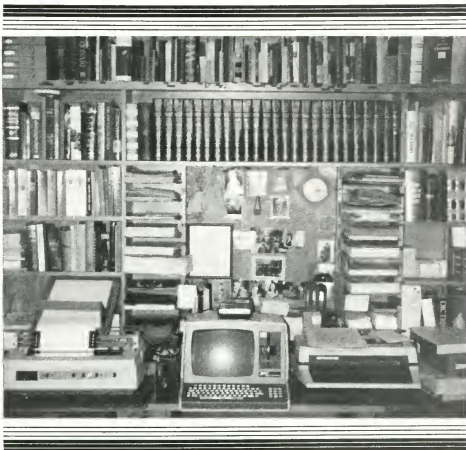
"Sweetheart, I'm glad you had something to say," I said to my wife as we walked out of the doorway onto the porch. I turned around for one last look at the door, and he was right behind us.

"I enjoyed talking with you," he said to me, and turning to Karol Ann, "and looking at your wife." He then took her hand, bent over graciously, and kissed it. Karol Ann, I believe, has not washed that spot on her right hand since that day.

I don't remember what I said next, the words are not in my notes, but I did thank him for taking time away from his busy schedule to visit with us. He was standing on the porch, his cane in his right hand. I extended my left hand to match his free hand and we shook hands. I remember being surprised at the softness of his skin; the handshake was firm yet extremely gentle. "Thank you, Sir," I said and started for the car. When I turned around one more time he had disappeared. I did as instructed and honked my car's horn twice when I cleared the gate.

Four months prior to his death, Mr. Heinlein, called my wife and me to discuss a project on which he had been working. During the telephone conversation, he confided to us that he was "planning on starting a new novel." (He never began it, according to Mrs. Heinlein). I suspect instead of starting a new novel, he finally completed the transition from writer to character. Now he is with Maureen, Gwen-Hazel, Colin, Lazarus and all the rest, while Justin Foote, Chief Archivist for the Howard Foundation, is dutifully recording the event for posterity.

Good-bye old friend, and may your sense of freedom live on in each and every one of us. □



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MAKE IT SCREAM



John Shirley

Jerry Pournelle was standing over me at a Worldcon party, and he was insulting me. I can't remember precisely what he said. Something about why did I have to be such a noisy, troublesome, "nasty little" attention-grabbing shit. He was drinking, and he was spraying spittle around all this, so it was a bit hard to make out some of it. I was jet-lagged and depressed,

feeling pretty limp, not really up for a fight ("feeling limp...not really up", these unconscious penile references emerge when recollecting an argument with Jerry. One feels that one is supposed to whip out one's johnson, as Jerry whips out his, and use it for self defense). So I basically just smiled wanly up at him and mumbled something like, "Oh, I'm just trying to make things

more interesting, pump a little fresh air in, Jerry." Was he jealous? Feeling I was getting all that wonderful flak usually reserved for Jerry? I heard that the Worldcon's questionnaires to panelists asked, "Who do you absolutely not want to be on a panel with?" The winner in that category was Jerry Pournelle. And second place? Me!

I must be doing something right.

I think we ought to have a panel at some con: *Obnoxious Assholes of Science Fiction*. Me and Jerry'll be on it. Hell, I'll be the Immoderator. Who else? Harry Harrison? David Gerrold? Joel Rosenberg? Oh, definitely.

I'm serious about the panel. Book it, boys, I'll cheerfully be on it.

I'm not serious about the assholism, O Litigious Ones.

But meantime I want to talk to you about something that is serious, and it has to do with Jerry Pournelle and its ilk. Standing over me at that party, radiating bullish intolerance, Jerry personified a state of mind that plagues contemporary life and endangers our future. It really has more to do with what I infer to be Jerry's ideology, from statements I've heard from him and his friends regarding regulation of industry, regarding the space program, regarding nuclear technology—regarding our whole approach to modern civilization. My impression is, Jerry and friends are basically of the school that advocates unbridled growth—in the space program, in the nuclear industry. Areas where SF writers should be especially knowledgeable. Knowledge brings responsibility.

Someone recently asked me in an interview if I thought that SF writers have a responsibility to speak out on social issues. Absolutely, yes.

We specialize in projecting the future. In extrapolation. I think we're better at it than most people. I think SF writers are better at it than so-called "futurists" and institutes who try to predict the future. If you drive down a road ahead of the other cars and see that the bridge is washed out, don't you have a responsibility to drive back and warn the others coming from behind?

In my opinion, the opinion of an SF writer, an extrapolator, our greatest danger is in our prevailing attitudes about technology and the environment. It's crystalized with especial clarity in our style of dealing with nuclear energy.

I was in Boston, at MIT, a deviant SF writer somehow slipped in with the Old Guard types, brought from the Bay Area to give my views on the space program. Anything that was on my mind, they said. I was speaking to a conference of the International Space University, space scientists and techies from around the country and around the world, students and middle aged professors both, and what was on my mind was 49.25 pounds of plutonium scheduled to fly along with a space shuttle.

I'm a believer in the space program—or, anyway, in some hypothetical space program. I'm a believer in its "benefits for the world". I'm aware that there'll have to be some risks taken for that benefit. But NASA's latest risk may be one risk too many.

NASA plans to launch two space shuttles, in 1989 and 1990, each carrying as cargo a space probe utilizing plutonium dioxide, mostly plutonium 238, its most radioactive isotope. The 1989 mission will utilize 49.95 lbs; the 1990 mission will carry 24.2 lbs. According to Michio Kaku, professor of nuclear physics at New York's City University, if either of those amounts of pluto-

nium were dispersed in an explosion of the *Challenger* variety there could be a catastrophic incident with a death toll in the thousands, or tens of thousands. Other people have made casualty estimates far, far higher. Dr. John Hoffman, professor Emeritus of medical physics at the University of California, Berkeley, tells us that if the plutonium from Project Galileo is dispersed by an explosion in fine pieces the amount of radioactivity released would be more than the combined plutonium radioactivity returned to Earth in the fallout from all the nuclear weapons testing of the United States, the Soviet Union, and the United Kingdom, which would, he estimates, cause 950,000 lung cancer deaths. If it gets dispersed over Florida, he says, "Kiss Florida goodbye."

NASA claims that plutonium won't be released in an accident because the substance will be encapsulated in 'clads' made of an iridium alloy. They maintain that these containers can survive pressures in excess of 2000 pounds per square inch. But a department of Energy safety analysis report concluded that if an explosion occurred on or near the launch pad, it would generate pressures up to ten times higher than 2000 pounds per square inch—enough to destroy the clads and disperse the plutonium. But suppose the shuttle makes it into space. The latest plan for Galileo that I'm aware of is to send it first to Venus and then slingshot it gravitationally from there back to Earth which it would circle twice before being shot, using Earth's gravitational field for momentum, to Jupiter. The NASA report concedes that there is a remote chance, as they put it, that the spacecraft may re-enter the Earth's atmosphere and burn up, thereby creating a plutonium cloud.

The plutonium is to be used to fuel a radioisotope thermoelectric generator for on-board electric maintenance power. But dissenting scientists urge that we use, instead, a combination of the latest in super-capacitor batteries combined with new advances in solar power. If there's an alternative to the use of plutonium, why take the risk? If there had been 40 pounds of plutonium aboard the *Challenger*, thousands might well have died.

When I spoke about this at MIT I made it clear that I do believe in vigorously expanding into space. But not in a way that would make the blundering that preceded the *Challenger* disaster look like a Golden Era of planning. Some of the techies at MIT maintained, though, that designing a new system that didn't use the plutonium would take too long; the danger was an acceptable risk because of the potential gains to society.

"What if it gets up to two million dead?" I asked. "How about that many? Is that still an acceptable tradeoff?"

"If it comes to that, yeah," the space enthusiast said.

It's this kind of mentality that has forged not only the sloppy, gawky NASA space program, but also a great deal of our bizarrely clumsy, self-toxifying civilization; a civilization afflicted with an excess of growth hormone, construction a giant too big for his own bones.

I'm no Luddite. I adore technology, intelligently used. But I think we have a tendency to leave our inventions only half invented. We are plagued with machines only halfway designed. We design the device for immediate benefit without regard for long-term side effects. And we're getting the side effects of our half-invented

technologies now: acid rain. The greenhouse effect. The sickness of the oceans. The following is a quote from a recent *Washington Post*: "A physicians group urged yesterday that the government undertake a national study of illnesses and deaths among Americans living near nuclear weapons plants, citing government studies that suggest increased cancer rates among workers at the facilities. 'We believe that the current situation at these facilities constitutes a national public-health emergency,' Officials of Physicians for Social Responsibility said. The group described the government's 14-state bomb complex as a 'creeping Chernobyl' that is 'steadily affecting the health and lives of millions of workers and residents.'"

John Glenn, a fairly conservative Democrat and certainly no wild-eyed alarmist, recently stated that we've been planning our nuclear power and weaponry facilities with an eye to immediate benefits with no thought to the disastrous results that come from abandoning long-term planning and safety considerations.

The plutonium cargo on the space shuttle is just the latest manifestation of the half-invention mindset. Nuclear power in general has to be re-examined. I'm taking the same position Carl Sagan recently took: Nuclear power can become useful, even bountiful, but not till we're through inventing it. Not until it's tamed.

And it ain't tamed yet. The Institute of Concern for Public Health estimates there may be 16 million radiation casualties by the year 2000 including 250,000 American atomic veterans, entire communities living downwind of the test sites in the U.S., Australia, South Pacific atolls, China and the USSR; people in Scandinavia contaminated by fallout from Chernobyl and hundreds of thousands of nuclear industry workers and their neighbors.

That dean of hard SF, Hal Clement, was also at the MIT conference. He argued that he himself was an atomic veteran, had been exposed to high radiation in bomb testing experiments, and had suffered no ill effects. The MIT techies chorled at this. I pointed out that there are always people who've smoked three packs of cigarettes a day for fifty years who point to their good health—but no one seriously uses these examples to dispute the Surgeon General's conclusions about tobacco. There are always a few exceptions. But statistically, the danger is very real.

That danger is not something we're supposed to know about. Much of the funding for research on the health effects of radiation is controlled by government agencies with vested interests in nuclear powers and weapons. Papers disputing the official government view have been repeatedly suppressed, until recently.

Recent breakthroughs in understanding low-level radiation suggest that the scientific basis of the standard for a safe radiation level set by the International Committee on Radiological Protection, the ICRP—is badly flawed. The supposed safe level is up to five rads; there is much evidence that one-tenth of that level is dangerous. Low level ionizing radiation damages cells and can lead to the formation of free radicals which scramble a cell's chemistry, making it easier for viruses to invade, easier for cancer to develop.

According to the National Institute of Health there are a number of clearly defined Leukemia clusters among populations near nuclear power

plants. The NIH survey was prompted by others in Massachusetts and in England showing substantially higher cancer rates among people living near the plants.

Over 800 scientists from around the world have signed a petition asking for reform of the radiation standard to one-tenth of the ICRP designation. Karl Z. Morgan, a former chairman of the ICRP, who served as director of health physics at Oak Ridge National Laboratory for 29 years, is one of the leading proponents of the movement to reform the standard. So far, nuclear industry lobbyists and government influence has suppressed the reform.

I laid this out, too, at MIT but the only response I got was, "You're getting more radiation than what you think is dangerous every day—your microwave oven and color TV both put out lots of radiation." But there are many kinds of radiation. The kind to worry about is ionizing radiation; microwave energy—which should not be leaking if your microwave oven is properly made—is not ionizing radiation. Neither is color TV radiation. Sunlight, after all, is a form of radiation.

Science, for nuclear power enthusiasts, would seem to be something utilized only selectively. Anything else would slow down the program, and evidently the program has to proceed at any cost.

The Weyerhaeuser paper company, a huge outfit that annually mows down miles of trees, uses a major component of the chemical that made up Agent Orange as part of its ongoing defoliant program. Indeed, the government widely uses the same stuff. It's a herbicide called 2,4-D. Weyerhaeuser uses the stuff to remove underbrush for a variety of commercial reasons. Trouble is, it first damages the topsoil, then gets into the water table and causes birth defects in the local wildlife—and also in people in surrounding communities. When there were complaints about this, the chairman of the Weyerhaeuser Corporation suggested that the local women plan their babies around Weyerhaeuser's spraying schedule.

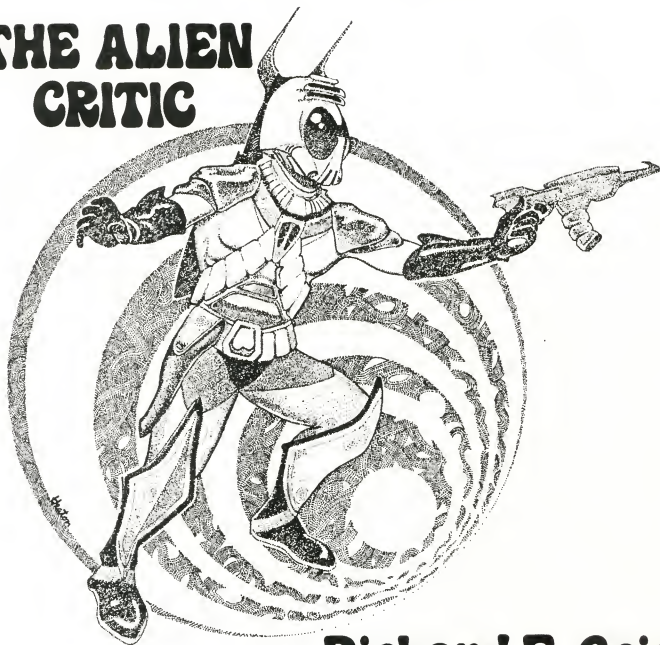
Not thinking about a danger to children is quite literally not thinking about the future. This kind of brutal cynicism and shortsightedness is pervasive in American industry. We're supposed to trust industry to police itself, without our regulation of it. That's what many of the more irresponsible voices in the SF field would have us do. Outfits like Weyerhaeuser and those who dominate the nuclear power industry have demonstrated they cannot be trusted with our future.

All this is not the result of unfinished technology alone; it's the result of unfinished thinking, of a mindset that emphasizes immediate rewards, examines a technological direction only in a childishly narrow scope.

I'm not suggesting that we abolish new inventions; I'm suggesting that we *think them through*, and devise them so they are environmentally clean. That should be the second half of inventing. As SF writers and SF thinkers, it's our responsibility to provide the imagination to help think the process through. And the will to look at technological issues honestly. □

[Sources of information for the preceding piece: *The New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Washington Post*, *The Nation* magazine, *Greenpeace Magazine*, the scientists and institutes cited in the article.]

THE ALIEN CRITIC



Richard E. Geis

More than four years ago I began to sizzle and smoke. Publishing *Science Fiction Review* became more and more of an ordeal. And reading SF and fantasy almost impossible. The realization came to me amid the stink of flaming dedication: I'm burned out!

And so I quit. I phased out *SFR*. I stopped reading SF and fantasy. I took that long, long delayed vacation under the umbrella of my life-long cerebral palsy and increasingly very severe arthritis.

It was fun for a while. But I began to get bored. And then I made a mistake. I published a couple issues of my personal journal. And then I picked up a copy of *Those Who Hunt the Night* by Barbara Hambly—and I was hooked on SF again. Hooked on good fiction again.

After that I read again, and again, and so this column was created. And so it goes.

Since *Stand on Zanzibar*, which won the

Best Novel Hugo in 1969, John Brunner has been writing fiction which shows his concern with social/economic/cultural issues. He has been outspoken in his advocacy of peace and disarmament and has viewed with increasing alarm the problems of pollution and corporate greed, the horror of nuclear war.

Brunner's new novel, *Children of the Thunder* (Del Rey, \$4.50, January 1989, 320 pages) is perhaps the end of the line for him in these arenas of controversy and advocacy, because in this book, which portrays a disintegration of civilization worldwide, in which corruption and greed in all areas combine to poison and endanger the public in a dozen ways, he sees the only way to salvation as a distasteful resort to a new man, a superior, ruthless elite who have the power to compel obedience by means of an inherited gene which gives them

the ability to make anyone they choose love them.

The power is a kind of charm/charisma/physical attraction raised to whatever level is required to ensure obedience.

Why this gene has suddenly emerged from one man and with such power is not explained (or I do not recall).

The plot and characters are secondary to the powerful theme, and the writing seems rather poor compared to previous work. The story involves a struggling near-future science writer named Peter Levin in England and his involvement with American sociologist Claudia Morris whose research into juvenile crime leads them and co-workers into an ever-deepening mystery and an awareness of a group of English teenagers who possess a strange power to compel obedience, and of the apparently vanished man who fathered them all by means of artificial insemination.

As the novel progresses, by means of news bulletins and the problems of daily living, an increasingly terrible picture of the world emerges and becomes oppressive and overriding. Unintended but inevitable man-made natural and unnatural disasters occur daily, morality and law are in a free-fall to disaster and anarchy, and government becomes increasingly neo-Nazi and dictatorial, using all the electronic weapons available to control increasingly angry and discontented citizens (but hardly ever the criminals).

John paints a no-hope scenario of mankind's inability and unwillingness to live with himself and control his technology. And the ending of the novel, pitiless and desperate, indicates the extent of John Brunner's pessimism and gloom.

What will John write next? More of the same? It seems to me he's made his final statement here. Why go over the same ground? Will he return to his beginnings and write pure space adventure again?

HOMEGING by Frederik Pohl (Del Rey, \$16.95, April, 1989, 288 pages) is fast-paced, easy reading, at first apparently juvenile, later incredible. An alien species in a giant spaceship send to spy on Earth a young human male they say they saved from the womb of a dying astronaut.

But his mission goes awry and Earth authorities are suspicious. Earth science is far more advanced than the aliens suspected.

The alien-indoctrinated young man falls in love with his young woman international security escort and a problem of basic loyalties surfaces.

As multiple lies emerge and as secret plans and counter-attacks are readied, the youth, named John William Washington by the aliens but nicknamed Sandy, matures with blinding speed and in an incredible display of wisdom, cultural, social, and personal adjustment, and independence (in how long—a week?) after his lifetime of regimentation, solves the crisis facing the hostile aliens and humans, saves Earth, saves the aliens, saves his own future and lives out his life happy and married, an international and interplanetary hero.

Had this youth had a year to adjust to the shattering disorienting personal truths dumped upon him in a few days, to say nothing of his entry into a human civilization which is radically different from that which he learned from long outdated TV and radio recordings, he might be believable as the mature, decisive, perceptive, commanding alpha male he magically becomes in these final chapters.

What Pohl has written and what Del Rey have decided to publish is an absurd science fiction and human fairy tale, a juvenile which will convince uncritical 12-year-olds and few others.

There is some good writing in detailing the Hakh'hil society and culture, and some hope in the post-WWII breakup of nations into thousands of commonwealths worldwide. The healthy and natural sexuality of the egg-laying aliens and Sandy's virgin lust is refreshing.

But overall this novel is a disappointment.

The Last Deathship Off Antares by William John Watkins (Questar/Popular Library, January, 1989, \$3.95, 204 pages) is an extraordinary SF novel. It is written in the first-person,

best-friend mode, it deals with hundreds of thousands of human prisoners of war surviving in brutal conditions inside giant hollow alien prison spaceships, and it has no women characters, nor any homosexuality. Sex does not exist, according to Watkins, not even when all those men get enough to eat and are rested.

There is, however, all kinds of physical brutality, hand-to-hand fighting for possession of the feeding niches set up by the alien invaders, and even a religion of The Dead who eat the losers who drift down to the bottom in the light gravity. These prisoners are the surrendered crews of the outclassed and out-fought and ill-equipped space navy of the worlds governed/owned by the Stellar Incorporation, and they were sent out to fight for Peaceful Trade by profiteers who provided faulty weapons and deathtrap ships.

The semi-humanoid aliens, called Anties, are super macho creatures who fight to the death and have no respect for cowards. They have utter contempt for humans.

Enter Driscoll, incredible, super strong, a superior man who is stone blind but who has more than compensated with fine-tuned other senses. He can outfight any sighted man. He has conceived a Plan to stop the horrible anarchy in the prison ships and eventually take over the ships and defeat the Anties.

Driscoll declares, "All niches belong to the Cooperative," and recruits men one by one, converts them, and sends them to convince by force others.

The Cooperative grows in power and early on has an encounter with The Dead. An uneasy alliance is forged.

The ultimate aim is to change the government of the Stellar Incorporation and get revenge on the profiteers. And we see a not-so-hidden struggle between socialism and capitalism, between freedom and "cooperation", between secular power and religion. The "Cooperative" always wins. Driscoll's cry has become "Everywhere is the Cooperative." Still later his assertion is "Everything in the fleet belongs to the Cooperative." And finally the ultimate statement: "All worlds belong to the Cooperative!"

And Driscoll has a philosophy-religion of his own: he invokes the Gradient as the lodestone for almost all decisions. The energy gradient (efficiency) is the yardstick, and the supernatural aspect is Driscoll's belief that when people die they sink lower in the Gradient—the energy spectrum—and perhaps retain consciousness and eventually re-emerge.

This novel, on its cover seemingly a band-bang space adventure, is actually loaded with socio-economic-religious bullets which explode in the mind to cause all kinds of thinking or unthinking acceptance in unwary readers.

The first-person, best-friend narrative style is unsatisfying to me: I want to be in on the hero's plans and moves at the time, not told later in shorthand form by the observer friend. And I don't like the novel to be one long flashback told to me long after all these critical events took place.

Nor do I like the idea of Driscoll needlessly sacrificing himself during the final battle in order to become a martyr and God-Hero so that his Plan can be socio-economically effective. I know, I know, the Gradient told him to do it.

The Last Deathship Off Antares is certainly a provocative novel, and a frustrating one.

Those Who Hunt the Night by Barbara Hamby (Del Rey, \$16.95, December, 1988) is a wonderfully written novel, tension-ridden from the opening, and a totally successful melding of vampire horror, science fiction, historical and detective.

I am reluctant to give any of the story lest I weaken or destroy some of the joy and pleasure to be derived from reading this fine book from the beginning. But it is set primarily in 1907 London, and involves an Oxford professor, James Asher (formerly a spy for His Majesty's government), who is forced to find the ruthless killer of some of London's oldest vampires. Asher's wife will be killed if he refuses the task. His "employer" is Simon Ysidro, London's oldest vampire, urbane, self-controlled, originally from Spain, with terrifying mental and physical powers.

The London and environs, and the Paris shown in this novel are fine, realistic, utterly convincing, and the people, their customs, dress and speech are all true to a degree beyond my ability to find fault if flaws exist. Barbara Hamby, American, convinced me she had to be English, and a scholar, to have reached turn-of-the-century England so convincingly.

All this detail is inserted skillfully to serve the characters and the story; it is all atmosphere and barely noticed background, all there to draw the reader in, deeper and deeper, to immerse him in a reading experience he wishes never to end.

The science fiction aspect comes from the genesis of vampires: what makes them that way, really? Why can't they endure sunlight? Why are they so incredibly strong? How can they control the minds of their victims? Why do they need human blood to survive?

Barbara Hamby has answered these questions so well she will have you believing vampires do exist, and will perhaps make you think about your eccentric neighbors in a new light.

The interpersonal dynamics—the friendship—which develops between Asher and Simon Ysidro, is subtle and inevitable—and satisfying. During the harrowing final deadly scenes, one risks death to save the other.

But of all its strengths, to me the most powerful of the novel is the grip it placed on my attention. It takes really superior story telling to draw me in (a hard-core gimlet-eyed reader of fiction from my fifth year) and hold me to the end. The pace, the fear, the suspicion, the paranoia, the revelations, the dangers permeate every page.

Strong mention must be made of Asher's young, pretty wife, Lydia, a liberated woman of character, of will, a medical student who helps her husband in crucial ways despite her danger. She too is utterly believable, not just a pretty face who screams with fear, and not just a token modern woman set classically in old London to satisfy present social imperatives.

Those Who Hunt the Night is one of the best novels of 1988, or 1989, or any year. You will be poorer in spirit and enjoyment if you don't read it, and you will be foolish if you don't make haste to read Barbara Hamby stories any time they come to your notice.

I'll see you next issue with more reviews, now that I'm feeling my oats, and with some more strongly stated opinions about writing and SF. □

There have been many opinions as to the usefulness of science fiction as a literary genre. The fun of reading about strange places and stranger beings and possible futures is, of course, the primary concern of most readers, and I have no problem with that. Sociological commentary comes along way down the list, along with the promotion of one or another political worldview.

I have my own hypothesis, however, and it is none of the above. Through SF, I truly believe, we can try, without risk, various plans and patterns for the future.

In his controversial book, *The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind*, Julian Jaynes recognizes the "analog I," which our kind sends forward through various possibilities, before tackling a new and unknown activity. This analog, with perfect safety to the real self, can work through any number of variants on a theme, creating viable reactions, new possibilities, and alternate routes as it is danced like a puppet along the paths of possible futures.

Such activity gives the 'real' person some confidence in this as-yet-unapproached situation, as well as in his ability to deal with it. Yet nothing has happened at all! And what does happen will probably not resemble the analog's experiences in any way whatsoever.

Yet it is possible to see the great psychological advantages inherent in the ability to create scenarios and to deal with them on an imaginary level. Mistakes may never arise, which might have been serious problems without such a psychological rehearsal. Who knows, in fact, what mistakes may already have been avoided, simply because some tale-teller explored the possibilities in fiction?

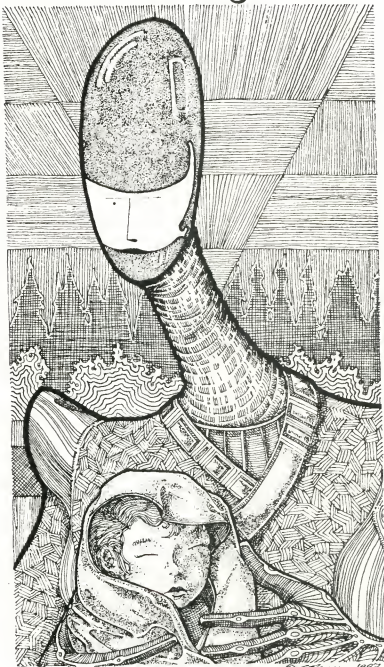
That, I think, is what SF does for society, technology, and individuals, as we all come to grips with the future and its mind-boggling variables. The human imagination can come up with just about anything that is possible, and that can give us glimpses of futures that we may not want to enter and progressions of events that we cannot honorably allow to happen.

Think, if you will, of what would probably happen if some alien species actually landed in Washington and wanted to communicate with our leaders. Because of years and years of conditioning for such an eventuality, it is to be hoped that our reaction would not, as in many books and movies of the past, be instant mobilization of the military. There is some real possibility of a peaceful and productive cooperation, if such a thing should occur. No longer does the term 'alien' connote only bug-eyed monsters on the prowl for nubile young earthwomen.

Peaceful contact will only happen, if happen it does, because we, instead of being isolated and afraid in our racial chauvinism, have been conditioned by science fiction novels, as well as some of the more enlightened movies, to look upon such encounters as possibly productive, instead of immediately and obviously dangerous.

If such a thing should occur, I would hope that Washington, instead of alerting the Pentagon to a war footing, would get in touch with the Science Fiction Writers of America. We, more than anyone else, are equipped to engage in the difficult and fascinating matter of approaching an alien intelligence and finding mutual ground on which to come to agreement. We have al-

The Analog "We"



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ready dealt, in fiction, with many of the problems of communication, biology, cultural differences, and mutual wariness that would be present at such a meeting. This makes us uniquely suited to dealing with something of this kind.

But that is not the only area in which I believe that we can make (or have already made) a solid and positive mark on the future that is now our own past. Who is to say that military minds might not have been tempted to risk atomic war, in any of the numbers of international conflagrations that have arisen since 1945, if there had not been all those end-of-the-

world novels hypothesizing terrible futures in which such risks were taken and horrendous things happened as a result?

Nevil Shute's "On the Beach," Pat Frank's "Alas Babylon," movies like "Dr. Strangelove" have given not only their authors but the general public a look at a world devastated by atomic war, and nobody liked what they saw. Not even, I suspect, the generals, who, ordinarily, lack imagination and empathy to an astonishing degree. Perhaps, seeing these dark imaginings, they asked themselves if they wanted to try surviving in contexts like those, and replied with

a resounding "no".

I don't for a moment say that SF novels decided that question. I do, however, think that having those glimpses of possible futures disseminated rather widely among the engineers and physicists and eminent theoreticians involved in our technological defense may well have influenced their minds to a small but vital extent. Politicians probably don't read SF (or much of anything), but those who advise them in such areas do, in many cases, read what we write, which, added to their own expertise, might well have made a difference in their judgments. Added to the reactions of the military, these elements might have tipped the balance, just enough.

Subtle it may be, but I think that the influence of speculative fiction does have a real effect upon the real world. For that reason, I would like to see some of our number begin laying their plots in worlds destroyed, not by war but by ecological disasters like the deforestation of the Amazon basin. We all know that the pollution of air, land, and water is taking place and that a time is going to come in which our species cannot survive, simply because of wrong-headed interests only concerned with the quick buck.

What if we began making it plain what sort of world will circle this system in another hundred years if everything proceeds linearly in the areas of manufacturing, acid rain, deforestation, pollution of the oceans, and a failure to utilize non-polluting sources of energy? As the background for a gripping plot, I suspect that this would be something rather different (at least

I have seen nothing like it) to present to the jaded palates of SF readers.

And it might, just might, make a shade of difference in the thinking of someone in authority, somewhere down the line. That difference, it is possible, might cause a decision to be made that would allow our kind to survive on its native world, instead of moving on to ruin another.

There are many other areas into which we need to insert the needles of speculation and observation. Education, for one, is desperately in need of a good overhaul, a complete rethinking, and a vital transfusion of imagination and interest. Our political system needs to be revamped to get rid of the wasted motion and money.

Even our wars, if we go back to the good old days of blowing out your enemy's guts with a rifle, need some time and motion study for efficiency's sake. Taking the same hill, again and again, when everyone knows we are going to walk away, in the end, and leave it to the buzzards, is not cost-effective, and we know it better than most.

Indeed, why should we not explore non-confrontational methods of solving conflicts? We have the imagination. We have the intelligence, I devoutly hope. Why not write books dealing with beings who, instead of grabbing up weapons and going to war, find intelligent ways in which to resolve their mutual dilemmas?

A phenomenon that has distressed me for some time, in our field, is the insistence on the part of some editors and some critics that conflict can only be a matter of violence. The 'rule' for fiction that conflict must be present for a story

to be a story is not even almost true. Many excellent literary stories have no conflict whatsoever, but deal with a sympathetic character solving emotional or personal or social problems on a rational level.

One of the reasons why, at times, the literati have turned up their noses at SF may well be the fact that too many of our writers and editors work as if this were a fact instead of an hypothesis. They should read O. Henry, for instance, who wrote superb stories that compel reader interest, and few of them contained anything our moderns would recognize as conflict. Many mysteries are simple puzzle-solving novels, dealing with intelligent people doing interesting things, without fisticuffs, sexual tensions, racial squabbles or any other obvious source of conflict.

So why not try writing books and stories of this type, sometimes, instead of the constant conflict-ridden material that composes too much of the content of SF and even fantasy tales? Surely there is room in our wide-open field for an "analog we" to explore the possibilities of non-confrontational adventure!

It may be useful to those who write SF, as well as those who read it, to realize, as we proceed with our activities, that the things we write are not just fantasies couched in technical terms. These can, if done well and effectively, be what Jaynes calls autoscopic images of the future, glimpsed through the lens of fiction.

They might even make a difference, somewhere down the line, that would have dramatic effects upon our world and ourselves. And that, friends and colleagues, would be a goal worth trying for. □

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MONA LISA OVERDRIVE by William Gibson
(Bantam Spectra, 1988, 260 pp., \$17.95, ISBN 0-553-05250-0)

Reviewed by Doug Fratz

With *Mona Lisa Overdrive*, William Gibson concludes the fast-paced, hard-edged romp he began with *Neuromancer* (1984), and continued with *Count Zero* (1986). With each new volume, Gibson has continued to develop as a writer of fiction. *Mona Lisa Overdrive* is succeeds as a satisfying conclusion to Gibson's three-volume saga of cyberspace.

Gibson chose a tried-and-true structure for his concluding novel. He carries four or five separate plotlines, with a separate set of characters for each, through most of the book. As the plotlines unfold, interconnections slowly become clear. In the concluding few chapters, all of the plotlines (and most of the characters) converge. It's a formula that works well with Gibson's fast-paced style (which gives too little time to consider how much is based on chance and coincidence) and his penchant for using viewpoint characters who know very little about the bigger picture.

To fully appreciate Gibson's work, it is important not to read it with the mindset of hard SF. Gibson has created a startlingly vivid and engaging surface for his milieu, but it is a milieu whose plausibility doesn't stand up well under close scrutiny. Gibson gives cyberspace emotional verisimilitude primarily through resonances with the graphics and concepts of modern video games, but never makes a serious attempt to explain or justify it in rational, scientific terms. Given a few minutes to think, one realizes that cyberspace, as presented in these books by Gibson really makes no sense. For one thing, limitations in the speed of information transfer and the human brain itself assures that "cyberspace cowboys" would be no match for the electronic programs of the matrix. Imagine the amount of information transfer it would require to translate and constantly update all the information from all the relevant data in the matrix into human sensory terms (primarily visual). Gibson never gives correlations between areas in cyberspace and physical geography. It often, in these books, makes no sense why the information learned from contact with the matrix got there in the first place, except, conveniently, for Gibson's characters to learn. In practice, cyberspace is simply a magical realm of the type seen quite often in the genre, but with a high-tech coating.

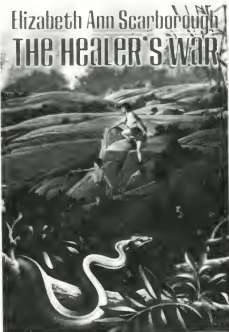
Gibson draws his characters from a very

REVIEWS BOOKS, ETC.

limited subset of his future world; all are either incredibly rich and powerful industrial magnates or impoverished street hustlers. The economics of Gibson's world also makes little sense. It's obviously based on a quick-and-dirty extrapolation of today's international organized crime network, an interesting but not very believable model for future world commerce.

But dozens of the concepts used by Gibson in these books ring very true indeed. For instance, Gibson postulates that as space and high technology create new wealth, some of the super-wealthy will likely become self-indulgently eccentric in ways not even possible with today's technology. And computer-generated artificial intelligences seem a likely solution to allow user-friendly interfacing with massive computer information networks. (This latter concept has also been handled well in the '80s by several others, including old Guard types like Fred Pohl in his *Heechee* books.)

In literally the last few paragraphs of *Mona Lisa Overdrive*, Gibson appears to reveal that his chronicles of cyberspace will continue—but not necessarily in our Solar System. It will most certainly be fascinating to see what William Gibson will create when he leaves the friendly confines of Earth.



HEALER'S WAR by Elizabeth Ann Scarborough
(Doubleday/Doubleday, 1988, 303 pp., \$17.95, ISBN 0-385-24828-8)

Reviewed by Ardath Mayhar

It is to be hoped that this novel will be reviewed as a mainstream book, rather than as science fiction. That is what it truly is, and otherwise many readers may miss what may be the most accurate and humane view of Vietnam written so far.

There have been a lot of macho war-is-hell novels, but this is the first of them all that has given any glimpse of what it was like to be one of the American women stationed in Vietnam. Even the most dedicated chauvinist may well blush at the male attitudes the nurses had to deal with every day of their tours of duty. And even the most "patriotic" cannot deny that there are obsessed officers like General Hennessey who are quite willing to commit the most ghastly atrocities in the name of war.

Annie Scarborough was there. Her heroine lives the sort of things that were happening all around, if not actually to her (and possibly even that). Her trek through the jungle, with an infantryman who fades in and out of a killing rage of madness and a one-legged Vietnamese boy whom she is trying to save from being sent to the Viet hospital (a sentence of death), is filled with detail that has to be authentic. They can be felt, smelled, tasted—that jungle and the physical torments of bugs and heat and dirt and wounds.

In our culture, it has been taken for granted that a woman's viewpoint is different from (and therefore inferior to) the male attitude. It is different, that is true, and if anything is inferior it is the all-too-common male penchant for disemboweling and otherwise discommoding his fellows. To find a war novel in which the protagonist is not dead set upon killing everything that moves is interesting.

To find one in which the main character is a healer, trying her best to help everyone she can while impeding at every step either by Viet Cong or her own kind, is not only refreshing, it makes one have hope, once more, for the future of our kind. Kitty McCulley was given a gift of healing, and it was not principally that amulet which the old Vietnamese, Xe, left to her.

Her main gift is the will to heal those in pain, to help those who are being tormented, and that is too rare an attribute in our sick-minded world. Her utter pain at having a patient killed beneath her hands rings through the book with complete authenticity.

People who used to be little boys firing stick guns at each other now rule most of the world. Still fascinated by their lethal toys, they manage, from time to time, to stir up misery for their own kind.

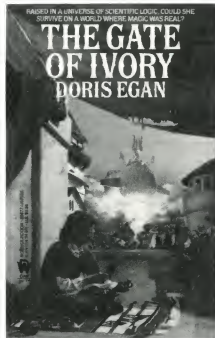
It is comforting to know that there are still people, many if not most of them female, who are not only willing but compelled to clean up their messes after them. To comfort the sick, to soothe the fevered, to tend the wounded is a noble calling. What a terrible thing it is that those whom they are there to help insist upon treating them as whores!

I suspect that many of those who were officers and doctors, grunts and airmen, will have their feathers considerably ruffled at seeing themselves through the eyes of one of the females they regarded as "not real troops." I expect some really nasty reviews of this book—from men.

This is not an easy book to read—there is too much naked truth in it. But it is an important one, and I feel that, given enough time to make an impact, it may even be a book that can make a

difference, however small, in the way women and men regard the pastime of war.

It is a novel that throbs with pain. It may be able to convey that pain to others, along with the conviction that it is unnecessary for human beings to torment each other for any reason. And even if it cannot succeed at that, it is a read that will live inside your mind and your heart long after you finish the last page.



THE GATE OF IVORY by Doris Egan (DAW, 1989, 319 pp., \$3.95, ISBN: 0-88677-328-8)
Reviewed by Doug Fratz

With her first novel, *The Gate of Ivory*, Doris Egan has made an auspicious debut in the science-fantasy adventure subgenre. Egan exhibits a deft hand at the conventions of the subgenre, and avoids most of the common rookie mistakes.

The novel takes place thousands of years in the future on the planet Ivory, the only planet where "magic" works. The protagonist is a young, female college student named Theodora who is marooned on Ivory when she is mugged and misses her tourship.

Ivory is basically a medieval planet with a feudal culture, but with a handful of high-techology gadgets (aircars, computer information systems, etc.) and modern customs thrown in with what are otherwise simply 15th Century Earth technology and social systems. In other words, a typical medieval fantasy world with a few bits of modern technology thrown in, a common science fantasy formula.

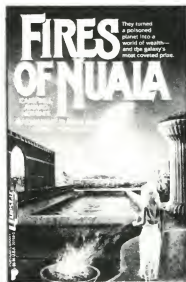
But Egan handles this formula well. The story of Theodora as she survives as a fake card-reader in the market place, is chosen by a sorcerer from an important family to become a real card-reader, and becomes entwined in the byzantine intrigues of Ivory's ruling class, is interesting and well told. The novel is extremely readable, despite an occasional disorienting transition.

Egan makes a brief, unsuccessful attempt midway through the novel to justify traditional fantasy magic working on a far future planet in an interstellar empire, which she probably

should have just skipped.

The Gates of Ivory heads towards a final conclusion, but takes a last-minute turn at the end which seems to suggest that Egan plans a sequel to continue the story of Theodora of Pyrene.

Fans of science fantasy adventure will not be disappointed with this solid first novel.



FIRES OF NUALA by Katharine Eliska Kimbriel (Questar/Popular Library, 1988, 324 pp., \$3.95, ISBN 0-445-20759-0)
Reviewed by Aradth Mayhar

Once again Katharine Kimbriel has explored the world of Nuala, with its radioactive context, its Sinis (who are human beings mutated to live as radioactively "hot" beings), and its even hotter intrigues and political schemes. Though this book was not as immediately accessible as its predecessor, *Fire Sanctuary*, once the story begins to move, this is a book that is hard to put down.

The beginning, as Darame wakes from her frozen sleep between worlds, is perhaps what disoriented me (as it did her, for a bit). The second chapter, in which the reader is plunged into the maelstrom of Nualan society and the unusual customs of the royal family, comes as a bit of a transitional shock, even for one who is familiar with the world.

But once that transition is made, once the slaughter of the royal heirs begins, once the complex strands of the multiple plots and power-plays begin to weave and interweave, entangling Darame, Sheel the Healer, who unwillingly becomes the Atare, and a number of his guard and his family, the storytelling is fast and sure.

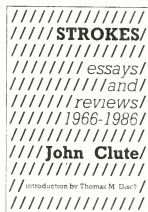
Kimbriel twists a tight knot of interlinked lives, fascinating people, a desperately sterile overall culture in which pregnancy is the major (and almost the sole) aim of every fertile woman and man, together with the dilemma of an outworlder caught in the web. Darame is a marvelous character, at once sympathetic and tough, with her own associates and their plot involved in the tangle.

The resolution of this flavorful stew of alien ways and mores is a dramatic one, satisfying to the reader without being melodramatic.

I have become more and more picky about the SF I read. Too much of it (and too much

fantasy, as well) seems tame and flavorless, occupied with sterile ideas, rather than with full-blooded people dealing with complex and unusual problems. That cannot be said of Kimbriel's work.

If you enjoy intrigue and action, original alien traits along with believable characters and interesting situations, you just might try this book. It stands alone, and you need not have read the first novel in order to enjoy it. But I will wager that once you finish this one, you will go searching through the bookstores for the first.



STROKES, ESSAYS AND REVIEWS 1966-1986 by John Clute (Serconia Press, 1988, 178 pp., \$8.95 ISBN 0-934933-02-2)
Reviewed by Anthony Trull

The "sensitivity" movement of the late '80s seems close to declaring that we all have an inalienable right not to have anything "insensitive" said about us. If this movement prevails, John Clute may be unable to publish gems like this:

"What's the use, the book is impenetrable to sense and taste alike; one worries away at it mainly from a sort of flagellatory desire to work out how far authors and agents and publishers will permit themselves to go in a hothouse market—because it must be obvious that cynical and pernicious twaddle like *The Patterns of Chaos* could only be written and published for enclave suckers, that in the clearest possible sense it is a book for the addict, and that, as usual in this sort of enterprise, the shit is cut."

The above comes from a review called "Schucksma" originally published in *New Worlds* and reprinted in *Strokes*, a book containing John Clute's reviews from *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*, *New Worlds*, *The Washington Post Book World*, and various other sources, covering a time from the New Wave to early cyberpunk.

The reviews are remarkable. They showcase an unsparring critical mind that insists on viewing science fiction against a template of true literary worth. Clute doesn't do quickie reviews, and he seldom recommends a mediocre book because it's a "good read." The reviews themselves are not quickie reads. They are dense with argumentation, insight, and vocabulary.

And they're funny. Take the review of Samuel Delany's *The Jewel-Hinged Jaw*. Clute pokes, prods, and turns over and tickles an assertion of Delany's about staid and experimental novels of the '50s and produces the funniest book review I've read in a long time.

Clute ends the book with 25 pages on some

of Gene Wolfe's later works. He makes two points that are obvious but which I had managed not to think of myself. One is that you should "attempt to read [Wolfe's work] as though every word was intended to bear meaning." The other point is that you can't truly understand a Wolfe novel without at least two readings. Some authors would not repay such attention, but Clute shows that Wolfe does, especially in Clute's detailed search through *The Book Of The New Sun* for the identity of Severian's mother.

Now, I have an objection to some of Clute's writing. Take this sentence from a review of James Blish's work:

"The dejected angst nostalgia for icons that so clearly riddles Frodomania—they might argue—bears a signifying relation to the post-industrial quietism currently infusing modern youth's bosom with repressively-desublimated Orestis Rot, and the same signification must surely apply to those weenybopero theosophies more recently woven, with dank cabalistic bootlicking and Art Nouveau cartoons, around the sword and sorcery fantasies of Michael Moorcock, for which he must take some blame, as he does not stop writing them, and has in consequence become a purple sage."

Even granting that I've yanked this out of context, I think a case can be made that the meaning of that sentence is obscured by verbal scenic touring. Some of Clute's prose is complex, but clear, and some is just complex. There is not enough of the latter to ruin the book, but there is enough to mention.

Despite these caveats, *Strokes* is one of the best critical works on SF published in 1988.

courage and left to wander a hostile countryside, at the mercy of even the least formidable threat. It was a real misery to wait for the appearance of the third and last book.

That wait was more than worth it. Seldom have I read a book that tied up so neatly all the threads of the story or showed (through actions, not through explanation) just why the degradation of the heroine was necessary to her own development and her value as a paladin chosen by the gods.

The psychological basis for her suffering is both satisfying and valid, and the thrust of the book addresses a matter long underrated and ignored in too many modern novels of all kinds. The willingness to bear degrading treatment without allowing the spirit to be soiled requires a strength of will and of heart beyond anything usually demanded by our permissive and self-indulgent culture. Honor need not be sacrificed, no matter what the situation, and integrity can rise above anything, if the spirit requires it.

I strongly suggest that anyone who has not read the first two books find them at once and devour them. And then sit down to *Oath of Gold*, which adds exactly the ending that strengthens the trilogy as an entirety. My only regret, at this point, is that I have no future book in the sequence to which to look forward.



THERE ARE DOORS by Gene Wolfe (St. Martin's Press, 1988, \$17.95, 313pp., ISBN: 0-312-93099-2)

Reviewed by W. Ritchie Benedict

Sooner or later, every science-fiction/fantasy writer seems to write an alternate world novel. Some create detailed histories where the plot and characters are secondary to the bizarre alterations caused by some trivial twist of fate. Others emphasize plot and character against a

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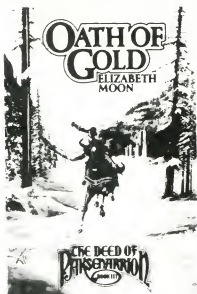
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OATH OF GOLD by Elizabeth Moon (Baen Books, 1989, 501 pp., \$3.95, ISBN 0-671-69798-6) Reviewed by Ardath Mayharg

As the final book in a strong trilogy, *Oath of Gold* does not deny the promise of the first two novels, *Sheepfarmer's Daughter* and *Divided Allegiance*. The entire narrative contains, in varying degrees, superb writing, a sound and gritty knowledge of military life and action, and a psychological/ethical substratum of enviable intricacy and depth.

The first book stands on its own to a degree. But the second, *Divided Allegiance*, ends with the heroine, Paksenarrion, bereft of her warrior's

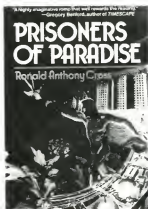
colorful or odd background. Gene Wolfe's new book falls into the latter category and is reminiscent of the late Philip K. Dick in that the reader can never be precisely sure which reality will be the final one. Wolfe is well known for his depth of characterization and complex plots, and "Doors" is no exception to the rule.

The complexities of this book make it easier to read than to describe. The hero—who doesn't appear to have a first name—is a man called Green. He has what amounts to a one night stand with an enigmatic woman named Lara. She leaves a note behind that has odd references to doors. Green is so enthralled by Lara that he feels he must track her down. When he attempts to do so, he is locked up in the local mental asylum. His only clue that things have altered drastically is a doll with Lara's face he buys at a small shop. The people in the mental hospital try to tell him he is a recovering alcoholic suffering from delusions. Green believes them for a time until he meets up with another patient named William T. North who claims he came from a world where Nixon is President. Together they decide to break out and with a little difficulty succeed. Another patient named Walsh who thinks he is the manager of a heavy-weight boxing champ (and may well be) also seizes the opportunity to leave. Green soon becomes alarmed by the behavior of North, who, although he may be from Green's home world, nevertheless shows symptoms of actual mental derangement. The two men are separated in a shoot-out which appears to concern the attempted assassination of a presidential adviser named Klammer. Green is left on his own trying to solve the riddle of his whereabouts and evade the authorities.

Lara, Lora or Laura keeps popping up in various guises—are they all alternate versions of one woman, one woman taking various aliases, or maybe just part of a complicated dream of a mental patient? Whoever she may be, she appears to be something of a goddess in this world. Until Green meets a woman radical named Francis Land or "Fanny", he is not altogether certain about his sanity. She knows about "Visitors" and is able to shed some light on the puzzle. The big problem facing Green is whether to stay in this strange reality and search for his mystery woman, or return to normal home world conditions (and risk being locked up in a mental ward for the second time). Complicating matters further is the doll he earlier obtained—it has a mind of its own, being sort of a mini-robot. Calling itself Tina, it becomes a sort of psychological support for Green. Eventually all of the loose ends tie themselves up in a satisfactory conclusion.

The charm of this novel is in all sorts of subtle tones. Lara is obviously an echo of the old movie *Laura* (made in 1944 with Gene Tierney) where the puzzle revolved around a portrait of a mysterious woman. Then of course, we have a power-mad paranoid named "North" who "knows" Nixon—an obvious reference to Col. Oliver North of the Iran-Contra scandal.

This book is one of those rare examples of SF that works on many levels simultaneously until some sort of synthesis is reached. Odd though it may be to those who are accustomed to simple stories, it has an appeal to a highly sophisticated SF readership. Although perhaps not for everyone's taste, this book should find a place as a cult classic in the best sense of the term.



PRISONERS OF PARADISE by Ronald Anthony Cross (Franklin Watts, 1988, \$17.95, 263pp., ISBN: 0-531-15083-6)

Reviewed by Neal Wilgus

Two books of 1987 that I enjoyed most were Brian Herbert's *Prisoners of Arionn* and Paul Park's *Soldiers of Paradise*. Now comes Ronald Anthony Cross's similarly titled novel, *Prisoners of Paradise*, which approaches the Herbert and Park titles in quality. (There's really no similarity among these three books; I just can't help but wonder if we've reached the point all titles will simply be permutations or combinations of earlier ones.)

Prisoners of Paradise concerns the exploits of Nightglider, a fast running, hard-fighting, lone-wolf warrior and explorer of the endless corridors of the fabulous Paradise Luxury Vacation Resort Hotel, a huge complex of rooms and shops and bars and shopping centers and—well, corridors without end. Nightglider is the toughest, meanest and smartest member of his generation of Hotel dwellers—descendants of those who became prisoners in the gigantic structure at some unspecified time in the past when the outside world fell apart for some unspecified reason. Run by a huge computer in the Hotel basement, the Paradise still functions the way it did before the world changed, although some sections have fallen into ruin, and, of course, the people living in Paradise have long since forgotten how the world used to be.

We learn little about Nightglider's youth and young manhood in the Shopping Center because soon after the story opens he has a run-in with one of the brownskin warriors from the Tropical Vacation Lagoon Room, and although he wins the fight he is captured and taken back home by his enemies. No, his friends—because after he endures the torture they call initiation, Nightglider becomes a member of their tribe, becomes loosely allied with Chief Fat Moon and the idealistic Lucky Boy, takes Lucky's girl Lana as his mate, and runs afoul of the sneaky coward called Yellow Snake, whose woman, Pretty Bird, eggs him on to dastardly deeds. Meanwhile, Nightglider is plotting his escape from the Lagoon Room, with its endless soothing announcements and bland songs by the long dead Lana Lomaine—while other plans are being made for him by the mysterious Raintancer and the clownish go-between for the Hotel Mind called the Adversary.

All of which sounds ludicrous, of course, and it is—which is why *Prisoners of Paradise* is clever and witty and, yes, even very funny in spots. The novel is generally well written and

fast paced, with Nightglider's unpredictable antics keeping the brownskins, the Adversary, the Hotel Mind and the reader slightly off balance and wondering what will happen next. Alas, Cross's story seems only to unwind rather than climax, even though the ending is a logical and likely one, and most of the loose ends are neatly tied up.

As is often the case, Robert Heinlein did the story first, although not necessarily better. In Heinlein's *Orphans of the Sky* it's an interstellar spaceship instead of the Paradise Hotel that has become the Universe to its inhabitants, but the situation is basically the same. But *Orphans* was one of Heinlein's lesser works, a throw-away, in fact—while Cross's *Paradise* is fully worked out and for the most part well worth your undivided attention.

Prisoners of Paradise should be on your must-read list.



THE DARK HAIR GIRL by Philip K. Dick (Ziesing, 1988, 249 pp., \$19.95, ISBN 0-929480-03-1)

Reviewed by Andrew Andrews

The Dark Haired Girl is the closest Phil Dick has ever come to writing a diary. Although it is composed of three essays and numerous letters to friends of the moment and loved ones of the past, it provides a sort of Hemingway-like road marker for those searching for Phil's past. It tells where he was, when he was, and mostly what shape his mind was in wherever he found himself in life, dating from the late 1960's to his death in 1982.

And there were the tropisms.

Dick had an unhealthy obsession with dark-haired women. In his short stories, novels, or letters, it is hard to tell exactly why. But he seemed to put them, several of them, on a pedestal. In a letter to Ursula LeGuin, Dick writes:

"The main thing [X-Kalay, a drug rehabilitation unit Dick entered after his "total collapse" in Vancouver] wanted to change in me was my great tropism toward little black-haired chicks. Love and grief over one of them—grief over her loss—had almost done me in. Anyhow, here they failed. Finally I got an offer from the college here in Fullerton, California to fly down and see if I liked it here, which I did. I do. Soon as I stepped off the plane at L.A. International, there was a foxy little black-haired chick the college had sent to pick me up. Whom the gods would destroy they send a black-haired foxy chick to. I right away got into another frenzy of mushiness

over this girl, rented an apartment, and fell right back into the misery of hopeless love. Wow!"

Dick's obsession is this: The world of today, morally winding down, has lost the ability to allow people to try to empathize, to feel for one another. Automation and the profit mentality have usurped people's ability to act like true humans. These fake humans act like automata or androids, who cannot feel for each other, but are perfectly content to go about their mechanical way, performing their role, mechanical duties. The fake human, like an android, really doesn't care, and only because they cannot feel, are a danger. They are predictable. They are straight-and-narrow. But there is a danger, a danger of being unable to cope with a distinctly unpredictable universe, in that. But the true, real human, feisty and stubborn and spontaneous and unpredictable, as in Dick's foxy black-haired girl, is what counts. Dick is troubled that there are not very many real humans in this world.

The Dark Haired Girl includes letters to friends, lovers, associates and relatives, as well as three essays: "The Android and the Human" (1971-72), "The Evolution of a Vital Love" (1972), and "Man, Android and Machine" (1975). Also included are a poem and a story, "Goodbye, Vincent," that are strange and quirky and full of despair over the loss of friendship and the "true human."

Recommended for all fans of Philip K. Dick.



The Lurker at the Threshold by H.P. Lovecraft
(Carroll & Graf, 1988, 186 pp., \$3.50, ISBN 0-88184-408-X)

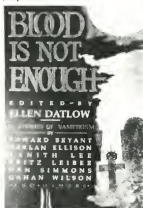
Reviewed by Sharon E. Martin

The house, surrounded by Billington's Woods, has a reputation that extends back at least 200 years—noises, strange disappearances, and rumor. But the taxes have always been paid, and the locals simply avoid the wooded hills that rise north of Arkham where the Miskatonic flows seaward.

From England comes the heir to Billington House, unaware of its history but bearing strange instructions from his ancestor. "He is not to open the door which leads to strange time and place, nor to invite Him who lurks at the threshold..."

In three parts, in three voices unfolds a tale of Elder Gods and the Great Old Ones, delivered in Lovecraft's pedantic fashion, but holding the reader spellbound all the same. The third part of the book, in particular, reads as if the author is presenting a lecture to anthropology majors, but it works. Rather than being bored by the academic, the reader is convinced that it is not fiction he holds in his hand, but the truth.

Poor in suspense, but rich in mood and lore, this is must reading for aficionados of the genre. But, beware! Dictionary required. Unabridged, if possible.



Blood Is Not Enough, edited by Ellen Datlow
(William Morrow, 1989, 319 pp., \$17.95, ISBN 0-688-08526-1)

Reviewed by Andrew M. Andrews

There are a multitude of attractions for the vampire tale, ranging from bloodlust to soul-lust—and in **Blood Is Not Enough**, seventeen writers detail their versions of the tale, ranging from an actress who draws her own "version" of a character from the emotions of her colleagues, to vampires in Nazi death camps.

Editor Datlow (fiction editor at *Omni*) is fascinated by the "sexiness" of the Dracula movies featuring Bela Lugosi and Christopher Lee. The appeal—the Victorian stamping out of lust only to empower the classic vampire story with a subdued version of that deepest of all lust—has been broadened, and the collection as a whole exemplifies the fascination with vampirism on an emotional level. From Harlan Ellison's "Try a Dull Knife," where Eddie Burma is surrounded and succumbs to the scyphopaths that inevitably take him, leeching off his emotions, to "A Child of Darkness" by Susan Casper, where the girl Daria suffers from a strange affliction known as iron-deficiency porphyria, imagining that she is that most inglorious of animals, the vampire... the lives they lead are far from the predictable and the hoary two-pronged toothmark in the neck.

What Datlow is getting at is the atypical, the new classic, the flowering sense of vampirism in Twentieth Century fiction, as depicted in my favorite tale, "... To Feel Another's Woe" by Chet Williamson. In this, Sheila Remarque, the actress with the "wet-looking eyes," lives no life beyond her roles. While no camera can capture her strange magic, her eerie and unnatural talent to draw emotion from the people she meets, and her ability to project that ability anywhere but on screen, she holds the centerpiece on what vampirism may mean to Datlow, and to readers of *Blood*. We'll see just what differences this may make in future vampire fiction.

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KRONO By Charles L. Harness (Franklin Watts, 1988, 202pp., \$16.95, ISBN: 0-531-15087-9)

Reviewed by Neal Wilgus

As you might expect, *Krono* is a time travel story and a pretty unlikely one, too. Several centuries hence the world is so overpopulated that colonies, called boros, of 5000 people each are sent into the distant past—millions of years past—to live out their lives somehow untouched by the world of that time. James Kouteau, the only developed character in the story, is a krono-man, a surveyor of the past who scouts out likely places in time where the boros can be planted—a misfit whose very inability to adjust to the hive society of the future makes him one of the best explorers of the past.

On vacation on Deimos, Kouteau is sucked into writing a report that recommends establishing boros in the lush greenery of Mars's prehistory—and then is recalled to Earth after he reports a psychic warning that a boro in the Triassic epoch is about to be swept away by a timequake. The quake does take place and

Kouteau becomes a pawn in the power struggle between the religious hierarchy of the Vyrs who are strict Malthusians, and some sort of faceless Council which favors time-colonies as the solution to population pressures. Kouteau suspects sabotage of the lost boro and he soon escapes from the Vyrs and heads back to the Triassic, with his ex-wife Helen and her young lover, to find out what happened.

What's a time travel story without a famous historical personality popping in, right? In *Krono* it's Edgar Allan Poe, whom Kouteau happens to run into while searching for a missing "stabilizer" to bring the boro back from limbo. Surprise—Kouteau has been moodily quoting from Poe's "To Helen" all along, and by sheer coincidence he runs into the real thing in 1830 in Baltimore, although the incident does nothing for the story or the reader's enjoyment of it.

Kouteau does manage to bring the missing boro back and with a little help he escapes the evil Vyrs and heads back to Deimos and that Martian boro which the Council now thinks is a splendid idea. The trouble is that the whole plot is so contrived and the characters are so uninteresting that you may not bother to finish plowing through Harness's pedestrian prose. Harness is blurbed as being known for "the accuracy of his science-fictional speculation," but it isn't apparent in *Krono*—a time travel story in which no attempt is made to explain the mechanisms of time travel or the abundant inconsistencies and contradictions which clutter the book.

All in all, *Krono* is a rather mediocre novel and you can surely find a better read to occupy your time.

HEAT SEEKER by John Shirley (illustrated by Harry O. Morse) (Scream/Press, 1989, 280 pp., \$25.00, ISBN 0-910489-25-6)

Reviewed by Nancy A. Collins

Most science-fiction readers may not be aware of John Shirley. Those that are aware of him are probably only familiar with his double-handful of extremely weird novels. But Scream/Press is now providing a chance to read a

selection of Shirley's short fiction, some of it dating back to his earliest efforts days as a writer, and I heartily recommend it to all freaks, geeks and politically-correct mutants. *Heat Seeker* presents Shirley stripped to the bone; chopped, hopped and ready to burn rubber, just like the living Ratfink-model on display in "Under The Generator". This stuff definitely ain't for fanboys or right-wingers. The works presented in *Heat Seeker* are as surreal and innovative as his novels; a bizarre, high-octane hybridization of Ballard, Burroughs (William, that is), Garcia-Marquez and Kotzwinkle, with a caustic, paranoid sensibility that is 100% Shirley. Most of the stories involve elements of what is now considered "cyberpunk"; biologically-adaptable software, rock music, synthetic drugs, video/computer piracy, weird sex, mirrorshades, etc. What's interesting is that the copyrights on the majority of these tales date back to the mid-late '70s.

"What Cindy Saw" is a perverse, Post-Modern retelling of *Alice Through the Rabbit-Hole*, except that she's a paranoid-schizophrenic armed with a can-opener. "Under the Generator" reveals an energy-strapped future where the government taps into the entropic power released by dying. "I Live in Elizabeth" is a compelling tale of love, obsession and possessiveness—in more ways than that one. "The Almost Empty Rooms" discusses a disturbingly inevitable nuclear holocaust. "Uneasy Chryseis, Our Memories" sketches the dangers of home-grown fascism and memory-transfer. "Quill Tripstickler Eludes A Bride" is an amusing tale of the aforementioned Quill; Interstellar Tourist Agent and Studly Dude. "Triggering" concerns a professional karma-adjuster and the dangers inherent in the family that reincarnates together, while "Ticket To Heaven" is about the side-effects of Yuppies taking undeserved junkets to Paradise. The other stories in the collection include "Sleepwalkers", "What Its Like To Kill A Man", "Tahiti In Terms Of Squares", "Silent Crickets", "The Unfolding" (with Bruce Sterling), "Six Kinds of Darkness", "Wolves of the Plateau", "Recurrent Dreams of Nuclear War Lead B.T. Quizenbaum Into Moral Dissolution", "The Gunshot" and "The Peculiar Happiness of Prof. Cort".

While I couldn't really make a serious judgement as to Harry O. Morse's illustrations for the book due to the low quality of the xerox copies provided, it looks as if he's turned in a good, atmospheric, Potter-esque job.

Scream/Press has a reputation for providing high-quality forums for the more outre masters of horror and weird fantasy, and I find it heartening that they are beginning to expand themselves and include the black sheep of science fiction.

DEEP QUARRY by John E. Stith (Ace, 1989, ca 200 pp., \$3.50, ISBN 0-441-14276-1)

Reviewed by Pascal J. Thomas

Stith has obviously digested the integrity, or at least a large sample, of the hardboiled private eye genre. So in the unbearably hot city of Dallad, on the sunside of tide-locked planet Tankur, we get a private eye whose cases and amazing discoveries only seem to come as momentary disturbances in the long, long, bitter wait for air conditioner repairmen. Not even



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keenwits and a sharp tongue (which Ben Takent has) can help then.

Luckily for us, the investigator keeps away from the bottle and the author underlines his playfulness about the whole business by inserting stock phrases from detective stories as subchapter titles. The plot is standard fare—the private eye, not content to solve a petty pilferage case, bests the Ph.D.'s at their own game by uncovering an artifact much larger and better preserved than they thought.

There are some inventive gadgets, but the pastiche aspect is what kept me reading with a smile. Not having to take the clichés of *film noir* seriously can be a relief after absorbing too many cyberpunk novels.



Emerald Eyes, by Daniel Keys Moran (Bantam, 1988, 243 pp., \$3.50, ISBN 0-553-27347-7)
Reviewed by Andrew M. Andrews

In *Emerald Eyes*, Moran postulates a future where the United Nations, in 2014, combines with the French and Chinese military and "assumes control" of orbital laser weaponry. The UN, now the United Nations Peace Keeping Force, under the direction of Sarah Almudsen, absorbs China and France. They are fighting wars with the US, the Soviets, and Japan using "tactical" nuclear weapons in strategic areas. Japan, despite having more than a dozen thermonuclear warheads dropped over it, never surrenders. (More than a dozen? How can this be? There would be no people left, radiation poisoning throughout all of Southeast Asia, and enormous amounts of property damaged and people killed. Does Moran understand the global consequences of even a "limited" nuclear war?)

The UN Peaceforce stumbles upon a method for genetically engineering telepaths into soldiers, and creates an efficient, telepathically-linked army. But—of course—the genetically engineered children grow up and want to become human, just like the rest of us, and not slave/soldiers.

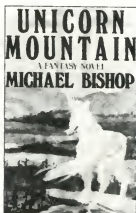
There isn't much material here that hasn't been covered as well by A.E. Van Vogt or Jack Williamson forty and more years ago. The names change, but the situations practically remain the same. I enjoyed Moran's style, the Heinelesque narrative passages, and the movement from character to character, scene to scene, but this material is old hat.



The Best Horror Stories From The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction, edited by Edward L. Ferman and Anne Jordan (St. Martin's Press, 1988, 403 pp., \$22.95, ISBN 0-312-01894-0)
Reviewed by Andrew M. Andrews

The editors of *The Best Horror Stories From F&SF* took their time in uncovering a large span of published horror stories from *F&SF*, covering the years 1951 to 1987, bringing up a few surprises (there are Stephen King's "The Night of the Tiger," Charles L. Grant's "Pride," Lucius Shepard's "The Night of White Bhairab," and Robert Bloch's "Nina," to name a few), and publishing some forgetful shorts that should have been relegated to the magazine only, or one of the major author's short story collections. ("The Night of the Tiger" had some moments, but it was another travelling-circus-terrible-horror-on-the-loose story with little inventiveness. I was amazed, having not seen this story collected elsewhere—was it in King's *Different Seasons* or *Skeleton Crew*?—but it was good to find at least one King among the few published in *F&SF*.)

The Magazine of *F&SF* has continuously published the finest horror fiction. Because of its small readership, most of those stories were sadly overlooked. It is a wonder that St. Martin's took the time to make sure we didn't forget.



Unicorn Mountain, by Michael Bishop (Arbor House, 1988, 360 pp., \$18.95, ISBN 0-87795-953-6)
Reviewed by Andrew M. Andrews

Mix together AIDS, Ute Indians, ecology, equine diseases, unicorn lore with the lives of people affected by each, add wonder and realism and hope, and you have *Unicorn Mountain*.

What Bishop attempts to do is astonishing. After thoroughly researching the consequences of the fatal disease AIDS on loved ones, Bishop has worked out the problems faced by a ceaselessly uncaring world and randomized in the factors of myth and the grace of imagination to produce a novel of redeeming hope.

The novel explores the lives of four people: Libby Quarrels (a Colorado rancher, now divorced, who sees unicorns); Bo Gavin, an ad-

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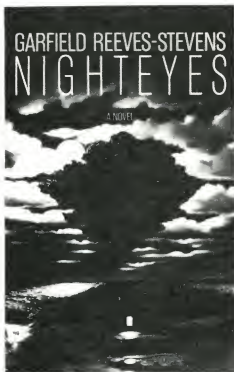


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vertising man who has AIDS; Sam Coldpony, a Ute Indian and a friend of Libby's, and his daughter Paisley, haunted by memories of her mother, who has committed suicide. The lore of the high valley unicorns and the quest for a certain magic to renew their spirits brings them all together, and provides a message, in the dark times, for us all.



NIGHTEYES by Garfield Reeves-Stevens (Foundation/Doubleday, 1989, 432 pp., \$18.95) Reviewed by David Pettus

Garfield Reeves-Stevens is a Canadian writer with three novels already published (*Children of the Shroud*, *Dreamland*, and *Bloodshift*). His latest effort, *Nighteyes*, is his fourth novel and his first by an American publisher. So Reeves-Stevens comes to us an already established, accomplished professional with a Canadian readership. Having read *Nighteyes* I can clearly see that an American readership is sure to appreciate his work as well.

In *Nighteyes* Reeves-Stevens builds a story focused around the controversial topic of UFO abductions. The protagonist, Sarah Gilmour, has been abducted many times, as has her daughter, Wendy. But she has no clear memory of those abductions; only vague feelings of unease and confusion. Still, the little people with the big eyes really are there. She really does know them. And they really do have their good reasons for visiting her. Therein you'll find what makes this novel worthwhile reading.

"The shadows filled her bedroom. More eyes all around. The whisper of shadows and nightfall and darkness. She felt them move on the bed beside her. Felt them move against her hip. Tiny, delicate hands snaked out of darkness and she felt them flow around her, grasping her, lifting her, up and up without movement as she stared into the eyes that swarmed around her and at last remembered and at last knew.

"The shadows had come back. And this time, they had come for her."

So ends the first chapter. *Nighteyes* is a great deal more than just another "flying saucer" novel, however. While the UFO phenomenon is a central feature of the book, it isn't the major concern of the action throughout the story. It integrates many of the images that we do associate with books like *Interrupted Journey*, *Intruders*, and *Communion*, and films like *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, and yet it only uses that imagery to involve us in a deeper, more significant plot idea, which I can't tell you about without giving it all away.

Nighteyes certainly isn't the only book of its kind. There have been others—Ian Watson's *Miracle Visitors* comes to mind—but few of them have been as well conceived and executed as *Nighteyes*. Reeves-Stevens begins with a family devastated by the unknown, and concludes with a cosmic prelude to destruction and the end of civilization on earth. It's strong stuff; but even so, *Nighteyes* is a hopeful, optimistic read with an emphasis upon the survival of the human spirit. It suggests that the aliens among us may not be so very different after all.



WAITING FOR THE GALACTIC BUS by Parke Godwin (Doubleday/Foundation, 1988, 244 pp., \$17.95) Reviewed by Sharon E. Martin

I grew up in a fundamentalist home and was fed some pretty outrageous theories (always presented as unarguable fact) about life after death. Heaven sounded boring and much too sterile for my taste, and Hell was, well, unspeakable. For my own sanity I decided to believe in neither, until I read *Waiting for the Galactic Bus*. Actually I am still a nonbeliever, but, given Godwin's irreverent and witty view, I'd like to believe.

Barion and Coyul, romping through the universe during a graduation celebration, are stranded on Earth. Bright and bored, the brothers can't help experimenting with the primates. Voila! The human race.

Problems arise. There's the dualism that Coyul suspected all along. And what's to be done with the energy when a body dies, energy that can be neither created nor destroyed? As if Earth and its population isn't enough, there's the afterlife to be administered.

Topside, presided over by a denim-clad Barion, and Below Stairs, guided more or less by his suave brother, are everything you ever wished for or were taught to dread. And they are the setting for the adventure of a lifetime (or should I say afterlifetime?).

Waiting for the Galactic Bus is a brilliant treatise on how circumstances create people. It mirrors today's chilling conservative movement, but it does so with wit and style. And it leaves an aftertaste of hope in one's mouth. That Mr. Godwin can write as well as he conceives is simply frosting on the cookie.



The Year's Best Science Fiction, Fifth Annual Collection, edited by Gardner Dozois (St. Martin's Press, 1988, 678 pp., \$12.95, ISBN 0-312-01854-1) Reviewed by Pascal J. Thomas

Three times the price of a regular paperback, but three times the size, here comes the mammoth annual-best anthology again. Dozois remains true to his taste for a science fiction that sticks closer to the present and to its myths, rather than to technological gadgetry and space adventure. These days, however, it seems he is being joined by many writers (beyond those labeled "humanists" in the cyberpunk bruhaha) and the voters for the Hugo and Nebula—Dozois' other editing project, ISAC ASIMOV'S SCIENCE FICTION MAGAZINE, has swept the nominations.

Here, then, are many of the year's major stories—the book opens with four Hugo-cum-Nebula nominees in a row. Among my own favorites are Pat Murphy's "Rachel in Love"—trapped in chimpanzee's body, a girl struggles in a society where she is seen as a monkey (and women's feelings are not that much better understood), Bruce Sterling's "Flowers of Edo," an historical story set during the Japanese Meiji Era, Kate Wilhelm's "Forever Yours, Anna," a masterpiece of brevity (stopping as soon as we realize why it is SF), Silverberg's "The Pardoner's Tale," a flamboyant tale of alien invasion and computer prowess, Karen Joy Fowler's "The Faithful Companion at Forty," a backstage look at Westerns' cherished heroes, Michael Bishop's "For Thus Do I Remember Carthage," with an alternate diverse St. Augustine as pro-

—continued on page 30

Send all letters of comment to: Thrust Publications, 8217 Langport Terrace, Gaithersburg, Maryland 20877 U.S.A. Deadline for letters for publication in *THRUST* 34 is April 15, 1988.

Martin Morse Wooster
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Silver Spring, MD 20907

In having my say in *The Great Semiprozine Debate*, I believe the following rules, rather than the involved description in the current Hugo rules or arbitrary circulation limits, would be simpler and more fair:

A *prozine* is a magazine that pays its writers and provides a full-time salary for its editor. A *semiprozine* either pays its writers or pays for (fulltime) editorial help. A *fanzine* doesn't pay for anything.

Using these rules to look at the fine candidates for the 1988 Hugo for semiprozine: *Locus* pays the salary of the editor and four assistants, and is clearly a professional magazine by every definition. *Aboriginal SF* pays the salary of the editor and one assistant, and is also clearly a professional magazine. *Science Fiction Chronicle* pays the salary of its editor, and is also a *prozine*. *Interzone*'s editorial staff is unpaid, but writers and artists are paid, so it's a semiprozine. *THRUST*'s editor is unpaid, with some payments to part-time staff, writers and artists, so it's a semiprozine.

I would also consider, by my rules, *Whispers*, *Science Fiction Review* (R.I.P.), and *Fantasy Review* (R.I.P.) to be semiprozines.

I think these rules would make more sense than applying arbitrary circulation limits. For example, in the most recent *Locus*, Charles Brown declares that *Aboriginal SF* and *Interzone* are ineligible for the semiprozine Hugo, since both now have circulations above 10,000. He's right about *Aboriginal*'s professional status, but the only people making money from *Interzone* are the writers, so it's still a semiprofessional zine. (And how can Brown claim to be "semi" professional when he makes enough from *Locus* to fly to Worldcon and London each year?)

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While it's nice to see Charles Platt back in form [in *THRUST*

31], the foundation of his thesis may prove rather boggy. While a person claiming to run a B. Dalton bookstore may have said at a convention that Dalton's policy forbade that chain to carry any books by various authors—including Barbara Hambly—I have evidence otherwise. The weekend after I received *THRUST* 31 I went to a convention (taking along the issue to finish) which Hambly also attended. When I met her, I expressed my condolences that Daltons had kicked her off the shelves. And just where, she wanted to know, had I heard that? I took out my copy of 31 and showed her Platt's "Two Kinds of Censorship." She read the proper section and laughed resoundingly. The rumor that Dalton had banned this stuff began circulating years ago, but was and is completely untrue. She assured me that every Dalton store, at one time

Counter- Thrusts



WHATEVER YOU DO, DON'T LAUGH!

LETTERS

or another, carries her wares. She has never had a problem with them because of the homosexual contents of any of her novels. Apparently, our favorite British expatriate has been had.

Bischoff's article [in *THRUST* 32] is fascinating. A few misconceptions need to be corrected though. Paperbacks go back to the Civil War, and proved popular in Edwardian times, as "penny dreadfuls". Novelizations also go further back than Bischoff indicates. Theodore Sturgeon novelized the original *Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea* back around 1961 (and wanted to do *Fantastic Voyage* as well). In the mid-'50s, a few of the worst sci-fi films also were reincarnated in print form.

Novelization as an art-form reached its high around the time Alan Dean Foster did the first *Star Wars* book (which had been turned down by Don Glut because they didn't offer enough money). It was around then that Sylvester Stallone, on the heels of *Rocky*, made his second movie: called *Strike* or *Flat* or something. One publisher bid through the roof for the book rights. The resulting book, alas, bombed. Since then, prices for the service have been a bit lower.

By the way, either I'm badly mistaken or Shirley is wrong about Terry Carr ever having had anything to do with Laser Books. Laser was headed by Roger Elwood, the famous born-again fundamentalist fruitcake. Elwood started Laser by convincing a Canadian romance publisher that he knew something about SF (which he didn't) by showing them some co-edited minor SF anthologies (he helped Sam Moskowitz with some research on them). Once they set him up, he naturally found that he had no idea what to do. So Steve Goldin (after Elwood bought his first novel) actually ended up editing most of the series. At that time Terry Carr was already well-established, and I can't imagine

why-on-Earth he'd have tied up with such a shoddy project.

Speaking of cyberpunk (as Resnick does in his interview), William Gibson was on the radio out here and, in effect, assigned credit for creating the cyberpunk movement to Gardner Dozois. Dozois was also one of the foremost proponents of the New Wave in its heyday. Although the New Wave has deservedly long since faded, Dozois himself has persisted through sheer willpower and endurance, and finally was rewarded with editorship of the most successful SF magazine around. At last he had the chance to rekindle the old order, as he perceived it, of that nefarious cult, and at a convention he decided to resurrect it under the guise of the term *cyberpunk*, which was copied from the story in *Amazing*. At least that's Gibson's version, for what it's worth.

Reading over your editorial on the vague qualifications for the Hugo categories, I'm reminded of an answer I devised to the mess years ago. What I propose is six strict categories to replace the current ambiguous ones: *Non-Fiction Prozine* (5,000 or more circulation), *Fiction Prozine* (10,000 or more circulation), *Non-Fiction Semiprozine* (1,000 to 5,000), *Fiction Semiprozine* (1,000 to 10,000), *Non-Fiction Fanzine* (up to 1,000), and *Fiction Fanzine* (up to 1,000).

Some of the other existing regulations could be kept as they are: at least 15% of each issue would have to be advertising for prozines, but maybe not semiprozines. But others are inane and should be dropped, like payment of contributors. As Schweitzer noted in *Empire* long ago, anyone can afford to pay a microscopic word rate. And how could it ever be determined how much of a person's income was provided by their magazine? Does anyone really expect editors to open up their personal

finances for scrutiny?

In my system, *Locus* and *SFC* would fall into a different category than *THRUST*, and no one would have to compare fiction and non-fiction magazines and fanzines.

I couldn't help but note that Schweitzer chastised David Langford for a fleeting, one-line swipe at Barry Longyear, while failing to come to the aid of some 32 other authors chided by Langford, most at far greater length or severity. These include a number who are also awful: Jack Chalker, Theodore Roszak, E.E. Smith, David Drake, Piers Anthony, and Robert Vardeman. Perhaps Schweitzer feels poor Longyear is a better writer than they are? Langford also ridiculed Isaac Asimov, Arthur Clarke, Robert Heinlein and Norman Spinrad, sure writers superior to Longyear. Why Longyear?

Could it possibly be because Scithers, Schweitzer & Company "discovered" Longyear? "Reasonably talented writer capable of serious work"? I remember an *F&SF* critic reviewing a Longyear circus book dubbing him a "scribbler". And "Enemy Mine", the famous award-winner, was copied from a story by Rudyard Kipling, and even that was not an original idea. Gordy Dickson had adapted a Kipling tale and won a Hugo for it several years before. Haven't Chalker, Drake and Vardeman produced equal works of "real substance"?

Andrew Weiner's implication that Vonnegut left SF back in the mid-'50s reminds me of Donald Wolheim's claim that Vonnegut never even published in the SF field. Actually, Vonnegut's stories were appearing in *F&SF* as late as 1961. I've always found him vastly over-rated, but he can never be driven into total oblivion now. This was impressed on me when I was browsing in a college bookstore. I was looking through a rack of little yellow and black booklets on famous writers, like Dickens, Melville and Shakespeare. And there by Shakespeare was one on Kurt Vonnegut. This series is well-circulated and constantly in print. Every year millions of freshmen buy these tomes to help pass Eng-Lit 101. Even if only a fraction read the Vonnegut title, the readership must be enormous. Millions will believe Vonnegut to be a towering literary giant, without ever even reading anything by him. Literary academia has so enshrined Vonnegut that even they won't be able to boot him out of respectability.

Reading Schweitzer's movie reviews, I once again can't help thinking what a prize he is. His witty, urbane, incisive, insightful comments are truly gems. His film/TV criticism should be collected in a book, so that others can have ready reference to the proper way to fashion such reviews. Doubtless he is the best video media critic today. (For any upset Ellison fans out there, I remind that he has emphatically said that he is not a simple movie reviewer, but rather an essayist.)

The reason that *Max Headroom* deteriorated so badly so quickly is that it was a nightmare to produce. There was just too much to be done to complete each episode to keep on a weekly schedule. One of the staff writers had to produce a script once in three days. If a series like *Max* is ever run again, it'll have to be on a more relaxed schedule—like nine or ten 90-minute or 120-minute episodes a year.

[I would like to note for future letter-of-comment writers that the above was distilled

from an 18-page, single-spaced letter, which totalled more than 11,000 words! (Several pages of which, by the way, provided an indepth lesson on Eastern European history in follow-up to the Montenegro discussion last issue; it appears that Montenegro, during its brief existence, was not a very idyllic place.) Needless to say, this is the longest LOC we have ever received. Lee Smith has set a new standard for all of you to reach for! - DDF]

Harry Warner, Jr.
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David Bischoff was quite interesting [in *THRUST* 32] on the novelization trade. But the novelizing of movies began long before mass-marketed paperbacks, which he cites as the start of the current practice. Even in the silent movie era, an occasional box office hit was turned into a novel. I have a *Carmen* based on the silent movie starring Geraldine Farrar, which turns the screenplay into fiction instead of simply reprinting the libretto of the opera. There seems to be some interest in collecting old movie novelizations—I remember seeing them listed separately by some dealers of used books.

John Shirley's article makes me wonder how many of today's prominent pros appeared in the mundane underground press before selling regularly to professional, mass-marketed publications. It might explain the puzzling failure of fandom to supply important new pro authors in recent years. Back in the 1950s and 1960s it seemed as if every other big new name in prodom had come up through fandom, but during the past 20 years that tendency has dwindled. Now it's more common for pros to get involved in fandom than the other way around.

I doubt that anyone will ever satisfy everyone with new definitions for professional and semipro and fan Hugo categories. In my mind, I have no trouble distinguishing between a fanzine and a semiprozine: fanzines are mostly given away while semiprozines are mostly sold.

I had already read the Heinlein letter when Dick Geis published it in his *FAPA* zine several months ago. I wondered if there are enough Heinlein letters floating around for a collection like those devoted to the correspondence of Lovecraft and Campbell. I was also disappointed to find Heinlein so obsessed with money at a stage in his career when he shouldn't have had any financial problems.

Darrell Schweitzer's movie reviews are models of their genre, and I enjoyed them immensely even though I've seen none of the movies he reviewed, except the remake of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, which I confess I watched only because I have a crush on Brooke Adams.

On the Reference Shelf is terrifying for some of the prices listed. \$49.95 for a 362-page volume, \$8.50 for a 69-pager, and \$45 for a 266-page collection? Poor typography in a \$45, 176-page book?

Television ratings services tell us that viewing of network TV has fallen sharply in recent years. I wonder if VCRs, combined with the illogical and inconsistent scripts mentioned by Lee Smith, can be credited with some of the erosion. I can watch a series episode once and

find nothing wrong with it, but if I tape it and watch it a second or even third time, all sorts of flaws in the plotting and inconsistencies in the course of events become painfully obvious. Maybe a lot of other people are having their faith in televised dramas shattered through the same procedure.

[It is indeed true that in the '70s and '80s, most of the best new authors entered SF from outside of fandom, reversing the trend of the '50s and '60s for new SF authors to emerge from fandom. Anyone have any theories to explain this change? Your comment about a collection of Heinlein letters is ironic; I just read in *SFC* that such a collection is indeed forthcoming from Del Rey Books, to be entitled (honest) *Grumbles from the Grave*. As for the high prices on reference and academic press books, the reason is (I believe) that these books are printed in durable editions with very small print-runs for sale almost solely to academic research libraries. As for network television, I now find only a tiny percentage of current TV series watchable; currently, I think I'm down to only *LA Law*, and maybe an occasional *Thirty Something* or *Wonder Years*. - DDF]

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I was especially interested in David Bischoff's article on movie novelizations [in *THRUST* 32]. I've wasted a perceptible amount of good reading time on them, usually wondering why afterwards with so many more worthwhile books to read, and I've always been curious about how and why they are done. I even had a discussion with Lawrence Watt-Evans on the subject a while back, and he told me a few stories he'd heard. I recall him mentioning that Alan Dean Foster had made his name in the field when his novelization of a turkey movie (*Liana*) sold more copies than the movie sold tickets. (The book's *Frazetta* cover may have had something to do with it, though.)

I've usually had the feeling while reading them that movie novelizations are just jammed through the typewriter or word processor as fast as possible, with little regard for style or smoothness, or even logic. Foster's *Star Wars* is painfully rough. George Gipe's *Back to the Future* has a minor gaffe where the author apparently forgot how late the hour of the scene was and has Doc Brown go shopping at Sears at an improbable time. Then, too, when authors have to flesh out the script into a novel, what they add often isn't very good or in the spirit of the movie, or they make arbitrary changes that confuse and confound and disappoint the reader who bought the book as a souvenir of a well-liked movie. With home video systems today, you might as well buy the tape or disc and forget the book. What can Alan Dean Foster possibly add to *The Last Starfighter* when you can see the movie itself any time you want?

Occasionally, though, the novelization can add something to the movie. Case in point: the novelization of the 1979 *Back Rogers* movie. The movie was apparently edited at the last minute to delete an important subplot—but ineptly, so that the movie made little sense. The novelization was based on the script, not the

final cut, so it made sense and showed what had been excised from the film. The same situation occurred with *Superman IV*, also the victim of a wretched editing job. Other than that, however, neither of those novelizations were outstanding.

I've only run across two novelizations that stand up right next to the movies on which they're based. One is Achmed Abdullah's novelization of the 1924 *Thief of Bagdad*, recently reprinted by Donning. It's gorgeously well-written, and can be read with pleasure without seeing the movie, or even knowing it exists. The other is Brian Daley's novelization of *Tron*. I was unimpressed with the movie, but let the *Science Fiction Book Club* send me *Tron* because I enjoyed Daley's Han Solo novels. As I began reading the book, the movie started making sense. Daley amplified the movie, even explained lapses in its logic, without betraying its spirit. I liked the movie more after reading the book.

But for the most part, novelizations just seem like junk-books, more movie-merchandising than literary, cranked out too fast and sloppily to be worth reading. (But if Bischoff gets more of them than he can handle, hey—I'm willing! Sounds like a-z-bux to me!)

[I believe the only "novelization" I have ever read was Clarke's 2001: *A Space Odyssey* was back in the late '60s. And I read that before seeing the movie (which I had to go 90 miles to see). I enjoy so few SF/fantasy movies that I can't imagine finding time to actually reading a novelization.... (Sorry, Dave...) - DDF]

J. R. Madden
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In looking over a back issue of *THRUST* (issue 21), reading "The Alienated Critic," I saw your comment about arithmetic and Donald Wollheim's introduction to 1984 *World's Best SF* in regards to the quote about feeding, clothing, housing the world's population for \$17 billion. I had seen that in my copy of the *SF Book Club* edition and was stirred up enough to write Mr. Wollheim seeking clarification. Like you, I had divided \$17 billion by four billion people and came up with \$4.25 per person. After all, the quote said "...to provide adequate food, water, education, health and housing for everyone in the world has been estimated at \$17 billion a year." That seemed pretty straightforward to me. I asked if there had been an error along the line somewhere.

Someone (I am not sure whom, because the scrawl at the bottom of the page is illegible) replied from DAW Books:

"Dear Sir: There is no error, except in your understanding of this. The 17 billion would be used to complete the irrigation and fertilization of arid lands, to build roads, schools, and factories, to create the means by which people would be able to achieve for themselves a reasonable humane standard of living. To create a "utopian" world is not some charity project; it requires work but the projects exist for this. Only the money is diverted from these for arms uselessly piled up."

Apparently, my problem, and perhaps yours, was in assuming the English language was used correctly in the original quote used by Mr. Wollheim. A second problem, implied by the response from DAW's offices, was that I could not infer the correct meaning from the improper use of the language. The errors, therefore, are in you and me and not in the original quotation. How silly of me to assume that words mean what they say and not what the writer means them to say! I did not pursue the matter further, for I felt I would be arguing a hopeless cause. The sad thing is that I would support the intent of the original quote had it been phrased correctly!

[I doubt the accuracy of even the alternate interpretation, but it is at least possible to imagine that a very well-spent \$17 billion could cure all the world's troubles. But I am fairly certain that charitable organizations in the U.S. alone collect more than that every year! And, needless to say \$17 billion is just a drop in the bucket to U.S. taxpayers, a fraction of what is spent on welfare programs each year. And despite all the billions of dollars we spend to fight poverty in the United States, it still exists—and indeed, if one believes the evidence of TV newscasts, is quite common, even growing. - DDF]

Jeffrey Kasten
80-2 Colony Manor Drive
Rochester, NY 14623

I, for one, am willing to take John Shirley's word for it that his efforts in the mainstream were a success. He seems to have sold his work fairly easily, and to have had some success as a musician as well.

The problem is that in his "Final Paranoid Critical Statement" in *THRUST* 16 [Fall 1980], where he announced his departure from SF, he promised to "shake our temples" or some such (my copy is in storage). I submit that NO writer could live up to his bombastic statement, al-

though a few bestsellers might have forestalled criticism. I doubt if Shirley is writing primarily with bestsellerdom in mind, though.

Shirley is right when he says he never claimed to be the next Ellison. Although their writing styles are not really that similar, their reactions to criticism are. Both defend their positions, dismissing a few teensy mistakes of fact, by saying that they are writing from the heart. This and other similarities in tone disguise the differences between Ellison and Shirley's nonfiction.

Shirley's presumably honest effort to quit SF was weakened not only by his return to it, but also by so many others having gone through the same process. And not one of the big name authors (Ellison, Malzberg, Clarke, Silverberg, etc.) who quit SF actually stuck with their decision.

I agree with Gary Farber that Shirley's specific con ideas are ludicrous, and for the reasons he states (especially money). But cons are moving, though very slowly, in the general direction that Shirley (and I) would like to see—as more genuine literary conferences. These reforms have to start slowly, and what better way to begin than by getting sword dealers and Japanese toys out of dealers shops?

By the way, in his letter in *THRUST* 30, Rayson Lorrey is obviously being sarcastic, and you [Doug Fratz] look pretty silly by taking him at face value. Lighten up!

[I do believe that you may be right about my response to Mr. Lorrey. In retrospect it now seems obvious that his statement that *The Handmaid's Tale* will join such "largely forgotten works as Fahrenheit 451, A Canticle for Leibowitz, and 1984" was meant sarcastically. My answer, which defended unforgotten nature of these latter three works, may therefore have been a bit off base. You are, by the way, the only one who wrote in to mention it, however. - DDF]

Gene Wolfe
Barrington, IL

I was going through a stack of old fanzines when I came across *THRUST* 30 and realized that I had never read it. So I did, and Benford's essay was just so God-damned wonderful I had to write and say so.

Phillip C. Jennings
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Saint Cloud, MN 56303

I'm writing to tell you that with *THRUST* 31 you achieved everything you promised to subscribers like me, and I am impressed. If David Langford can be enticed to do more for you, that would be delightful. When a Lionel Fanthorpe award is suitably endowed, he should be made a permanent member of the review committee.

I hope the excitement caused by issue 31 feeds back to your contributors so that issue 32 will be even better.

[In general, I can't stand editors who self-servingly include glowingly favorable letters of comment in their magazines. But when I'm putting in 16-hour days and 80-hour weeks, receiving letters like this helps keep me going. I hope



you'll all forgive me the indulgence of actually printing some of them . . . - DDF]

We Also Heard From:

Jack Williamson, who read *THRUST* 32 cover-to-cover;

John Fitzsimmons, who thought *THRUST* 31 was the best issue of any magazine he has read in many years;

Michael P. Kube-McDowell, who noted for posterity that *Alternities* was dedicated to former *Amazing* editor Elinor Mavor, not "Eleanor Mavor";

Avram Davidson, who read issue 31 cover-to-cover, and fears that Piers Anthony has now written down in his little black book Dave Langford's name; and,

Someone named Carter from New Orleans, with the simple but enigmatic message, "*Chronicle* has fallen apart—*THRUST* has overtaken it! Kudos!" □

REVIEWS

Continued From Page 26

tagonist, Kim Stanley Robinson's "Mother Goddess of the World," a hilarious narrative of an Everest climb done as a picnic walk.

Sterling, Robinson, Fowler, Bishop and Murphy are producing texts which look less and less like SF, a healthy sign—for a genre which starts looking too much like itself is a dying one. As for sense of wonder, it is still alive, in smaller doses; it shines through Silverberg's story, or those of beginners Joseph Manzione and Michael Flynn.

DEAD IN THE WEST By Joe Lansdale (Space & Time Press, 1988, 118 pp., \$6.95)
Reviewed by Lee Smith

Basically, this is *Night of the Living Dead* transposed to the Old West.

As such, it's minimally satisfying—given the status of its other elements. Plot: dual story-lines complement one another, but aren't sufficiently merged early-on. Background: sketchy, out-of-phase, though stark and serviceable. Characterization: generally, erratically quirky, like Gumby-figures painfully striving to act real, lacking any delineated pattern of order—yet consistent and somehow adequate by sheer bluntness. Word-choice and punctuation: too careless, not forceful and effective enough for the results the author desires. Tone: flawed, strained, but tolerable and interest-absorbing nonetheless. Narrative-flow: unsustained, lurching and jerking at times. Only the main idea and the raw, almost intense conceptual-assault make the novel marginally successful.

Occasionally Lansdale turns colorful phrases: "morning slipped in on the breath of a cool wind as the birds sang in symphony." (Pg. 9) "With the sun kicked out and a gold doubleton moor in its place—" (Pg. 20) "His teeth-looking like sugar cubes in the midst of tomato-pulp with eyes-snapped open and closed a few times." (Pg. 81) "Lizards of fear scuttled up her body." (Pg. 82) Bits like this indicate Lansdale has potential.

At the same time, he provides clunkers like such. "The doctor wheeled the wheelbarrow full

of glooby man-parts and stained suit into his office." (Pg. 49) "The way it was torn up wolves were suspicious." (Pg. 21) "He was as shook as an Indian rattle." (Pg. 25) And besides these bollixes, many sentences are such tangled-mires of poor juxtaposition and dull present-tense that they become stomach-churning.

Strangely, some characters stand out most as good points. Despite his brief appearance, drunk Nate Foster remains memorable. And the Reverend Jebidah Mercer is something else again: a stunning portrayal, a deep, layered personage of striking reality—brought to life not

so much by technique (though the early dream-flashback sequence helps) as by deft, astute conception; he's a magnificent synthesis, an almost-perfect blending of various human attributes. Even minor players like the sheriff's deputy fit the general design well. If Lansdale learns some craft-dynamics and mechanics—he might produce something really good.

If only for the scene in the doctor's office (where a body's dismembered parts in jars break their glass, crawl together, and assemble in a hideous whole), I have to recommend giving it a browse. □

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